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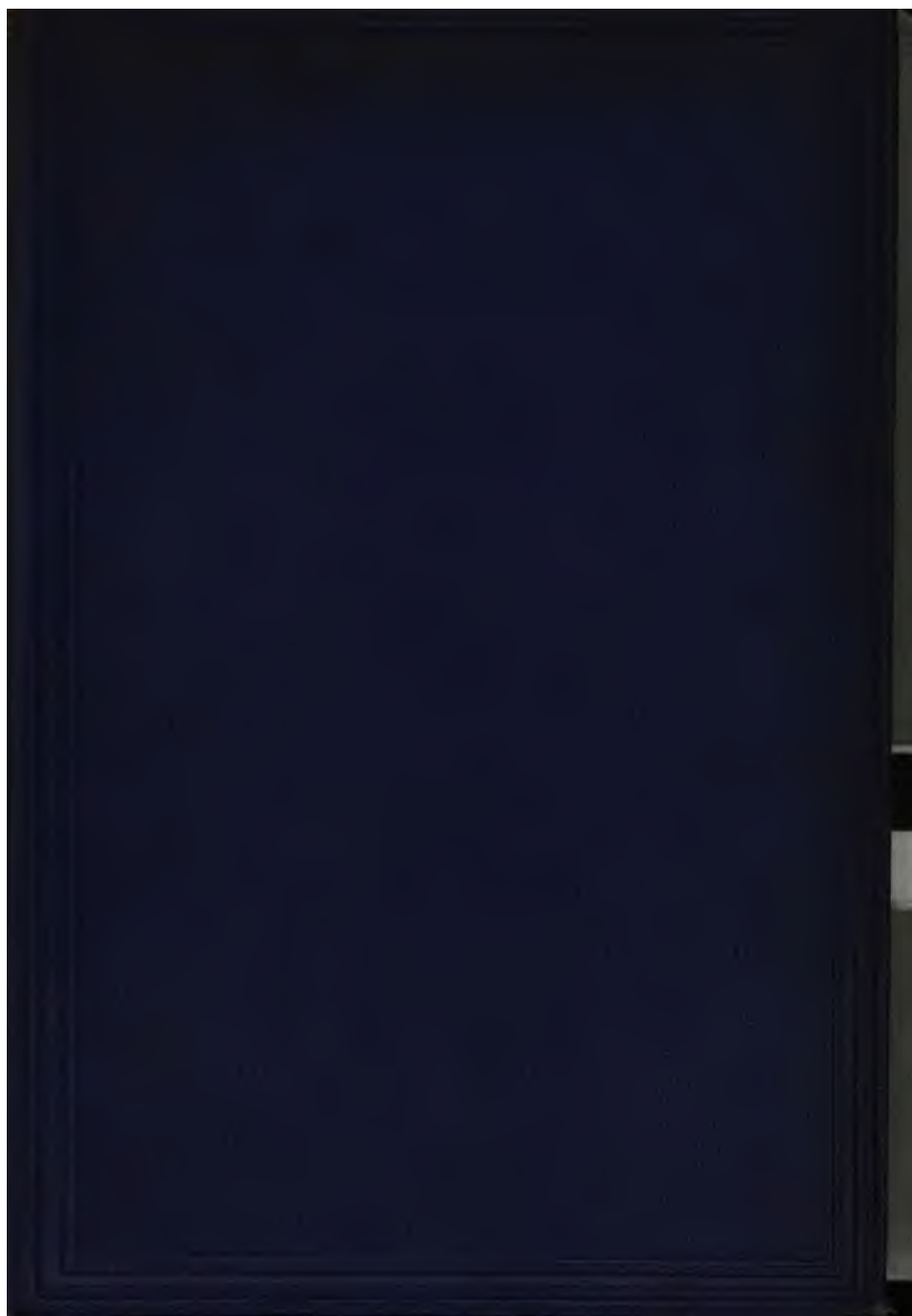
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BAPTISM.

BAPTISM
AND
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

BY THE
REV. ARCHIBALD BOYD, A.M.
INCUMBENT OF PADDINGTON, AND HON. CANON OF GLOUCESTER.

"The Holy Spirit is not so constituted the Inhabiter of that temple, as not
to have faith for his true High Priest."—*Jerom. adv. Lucif. c. iv.*

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PREFACE.

THE substance of this Work was delivered as Lectures during last Advent, and, as the subject is peculiar, it may be necessary to advert to the circumstances which appeared to demand its discussion.

It not unfrequently happens that points and subjects of admitted importance lie outside the lines of a pastor's ordinary ministrations. It may be that no special circumstance calls for their consideration, that no necessity dictates an allusion to them. They have either been taken on all hands for granted, or assumed to be beyond controversy, or understood to belong rather to a small section than to the mass of an ordinary congregation. And thus years of ministrations may pass by, unmarked by any discussion of them in the course of Sabbath exposition. Of these



subjects, that of Baptism is one. Men have been contented to adopt it as a thing so sanctioned by usage, and so settled for ever by previous controversies, as not to require instruction respecting it or vindication of it. Week after week children have been brought to the font, sponsors have entered into the stereotyped stipulations, ministers have used the old and familiar service, and congregations rest satisfied that "all things have been done decently and in order;" that the door of admission into the Christian fold has been opened, and little children suffered, in the way of His own appointment, to "come to Jesus."

But circumstances have recently arisen to disturb this tranquil contentment. In a time of good understanding and attempted fellowship with those who dissent from our Church,—a time marked by great concession and almost extreme forbearance on the part of the Church of England,—it has pleased some, of more zeal for party than for Christ, to lay lance in rest and make a furious charge on the lines of our Zion; to indulge in, not simply insinuations of our unsoundness and temperate doubts as to the unscripturality of our usages, but in charges affecting the character of

the ministers of that very section of the Church which has taken them and their brethren into confidence and fellowship. In language which disdains to be guarded and glories in being unequivocal, nine or ten thousand of the ministers of the Church have been branded with meanness, sordidness, dishonesty, immorality, and falsehood. Hard terms these—so hard, that unless proof were adduced of their actual use, men would be disposed to doubt the possibility of their utterance. But, unhappily, we can put incredulity to rest for ever by citation of some of the language used. “That crafty kindness which inveigles men
“ to sacrifice principle is the serpent in the grass
“ —deadly to the incautious wayfarer. Where
“ union and friendship are not cemented by
“ truth, they are an unhallowed confederacy.
“ It is time there should be an end put to the
“ flirtations of honest men with those who believe
“ one way and swear another. If men believe
“ Baptism works Regeneration, let them say so;
“ but if they do not believe it in their hearts, and
“ yet subscribe, and, yet more, get their living by
“ subscribing to words asserting it, let them find
“ congenial associates among men who can

“equivocate and shuffle, for honest men will
“neither ask nor accept their friendship. . . .
“For clergymen to swear or say that they give
“their solemn assent and consent to what they do
“not believe is one of the grossest pieces of
“immorality perpetrated in England, and is most
“pestilential in its influence, since it directly
“teaches men to lie, whenever it seems necessary
“to do so in order to get a living. It is, in fact,
“an open testimony from priestly lips that, at
“least in ecclesiastical matters, falsehood may
“express truth,—and truth itself is a mere un-
“important nonentity.”

Except in a very few honourable instances, these sentiments have not been disowned by the ministers or members of that particular denomination to which the slanderer belongs. Nay, they have rather been endorsed by approval than repudiated by generous indignation. As far as the absence of condemnation goes, they may be considered as expressing the opinions and feelings of that communion.

Now, to language such as this it is impossible to reply. It were a disgrace to imitate and a humiliation to answer it. The

threat of losing such friendship is one that the clergy of the English Church can afford to hear without overwhelming distress or corroding anguish. But this it does seem to me to lie upon the ministers of the Church to do—to go into the consideration of the whole of the subject thus dragged forward for controversy; to offer to our flocks such instruction on it as may tranquillize their minds, if disturbed, and confirm allegiance to the Church if shaken; and to prove that those who have indulged in such invectives have not only assumed most rashly the position of the “accusers of the brethren,” but displayed in the whole management of the argument and the entire current of the statements made, the most astounding, and—for men undertaking the education of congregations—the most unpardonable ignorance. If that be the conclusion at which this Work arrives, and, still more, if we go beyond the original point, and show the baselessness of the system to which they belong, be it recollected that that result is not of our seeking, but the fruit of a necessity wantonly imposed upon us.

February, 1865.



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BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

SACRAMENTS.

IN the preface prefixed to these chapters I have stated the immediate occasion which has produced them as well as the range which they are likely to embrace. The general subject is Baptism, but that I shall have occasion to consider in reference to its institution, the benefits it confers, and its relation to the several points of the right of infants to claim a participation in those benefits, the character and duties of sponsors, and, that most misunderstood office of our Church, the Baptismal service. But it will be difficult, if

not impossible, to enter on at least the first of these topics without dwelling on the nature and uses of Sacraments generally. To that point I mean to address the observations of this chapter, and then to proceed to the successive consideration of the others.

In studying the peculiarities of the two Dispensations, we find two ordinances in each standing forward in the midst of other rites with special prominence. In the dispensation of Moses we meet with Circumcision and the Passover, and in the dispensation of Christ with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. All these institutions stand on the same foundation, for they are all of Divine appointment. Circumcision was ordained in Abraham and the Passover in Moses, and that by the immediate injunction of God Himself. The same authority is stamped on the Christian ordinances. There is no doubt that Baptism existed as a religious rite among the Jews long previous to the days of our Lord,—a fact which enters with some force into the subject of the Baptism of infants. But it is not on that account that we recognise its appearance among the ordinances of Christianity, but because it was

adopted and enjoined by the words of our Lord Himself. It is true (we may observe in passing) that in the command which makes Baptism imperative on Christians there is no special injunction or precept respecting infants; but if it can be shown that it had all along been administered in the older dispensation, that omission would at once be accounted for. The general order would include the particular application, and the custom already in existence would be assumed to determine the quality of the subjects of it. The Lord's Supper, like its type the Passover, stands on the same foundation: "Do this in remembrance of me," makes it of Divine appointment.

There is another feature which distinguishes these two ordinances of the Gospel from the rites which surround them. Each of them has in it an outward and material sign as well as an inward grace. It is this which helps to elevate them into the position of sacraments, for under the external is veiled something which is spiritual. It is not simply the case, that underneath the administration of material elements, there lies a concealed spiritual mercy, but that through that

administration a religious efficacy may be expected. The outward and visible symbolizes the inward and spiritual; but it does more, for it — not of course, necessarily and always — conveys it. If it were otherwise, we should have in the Sacraments only the hints and suggestions of moral effects, but not in them the channels of those moral effects. We require, in other words, not only ordinances which hint, but ordinances which affect; in Baptism something more than the mere intimation that we require a “death unto sin and a life unto righteousness,” and in the Supper something more than a hint that we need “refreshment and strength” for our souls. Other ceremonies may have some of these characteristics of Divine appointment, outward sign and inward efficacy, but only Sacraments possess them all. For this reason, with a remarkable harmony, all Churches endorse Baptism and the Supper as sacraments. In the Confessions of the Swiss, French, Dutch, German, Scotch, and Belgian Churches, we find them assuming the place ceded to them also by the Church of England. The Church of Rome, it is true, adds to them other rites which she has elevated to their level,

but in doing so, she has put herself at variance with the Church Catholic, and even with her own definitions.*

Now, as to the use which sacraments subserve, we consider one of the most important to be this, that they express, protect, and perpetuate doctrines. We must be all aware that great truths, relying for their permanency only on words or writing, are to a great degree in a state precarious, especially in times when the remembrance of facts depends very much on oral communication. And even in times like our own, when history is shielded from perversion or oblivion, by the care bestowed on written documents and the multiplication of printed records, many instances might be adduced to show the inadequacy of those safeguards to rescue facts from uncertainty. Certain localities are pointed to as, in the general, the scene of acts which have occurred in our own day; and yet, unless the precise spot be marked by some indestructible memorial, human recollection fails in the attempt at identification. For the determination of boundaries we trust not altogether to maps or surveys, which in the casualties of time may be

* See Appendix A.

destroyed or altered, but, coincidently at least with these, rely on even the unlettered stone. It is not in its place without reason, for it has a tale to tell or a recollection to stimulate. It is so with great truths, whether they be doctrinal or historical as well. The traditionary report of them may die away, the written document may be lost. All history testifies to this, for what know we of many things, circumstances, opinions, belonging to far-off times? The traditional histories of Egypt and Assyria are unsatisfactory and scanty. Manuscripts (if ever they existed) have crumbled away in the lapse of ages, but the monument and pyramid remain. Names, circumstances, and facts, are enshrined in a form more durable than words or writing. And the same is traceable in the tale that the cross or pillar without inscription still tells, of the persons and acts of other days. That was the very intention, or at least one intention, of the Passover. It was an act solemn and significant, because it enshrined and guarded a truth. "It shall come to pass, when " your children shall say unto you, What mean " ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is " the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed " over the houses of the children of Israel in

“Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and “delivered our houses.” Let the written record be lost, the act still remained, and that act was a standing, living history of a great and merciful interposition. So is it with the Sacraments. They are memorials and conservators of doctrines. For example, let an uninformed but reflecting man enter into a Christian temple while the ordinance of Baptism is being administered, hear the words spoken and study the actions done, and it would be strange if he did not spell out a body of doctrine from them. That aspersion of water, done religiously, for the soul and not the body,—what could it declare but the existence of corruption in an infant which needed to be washed away? That depositing of the child by the parents’ or sponsors’ hands into the hands of the minister,—what could it mean, but that they surrendered natural rights, and gave their little one to God? That dedication in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—what did it record but the connexion of the babe with a Triune Jehovah? And so with regard to the Supper. Let a stranger, ignorant by education of Christianity, stand by and note the celebration of the

Eucharist, and must he not feel that Christian fellowship, the recollection of an absent One, and spiritual nourishment, are all facts of our religion? The question put to himself, "What mean they by this service?" would, on reflection, yield these very points as deductions. So that, while these ordinances remained in the Church, truth would have an additional security against extinction. We say not that it would come before us as clearly or fully as the written word presents it, but we do say, that God, in caring for the preservation of His truth, while He trusted it to what men said and men wrote, trusted it likewise to what men did.


There is, again, no question that a second great use which Sacraments subserve, is that of acting as seals and pledges of substantial benefits implied — benefits which might not be conferred, it may be, till long after the time at which the pledge was given. There is no doubt that these benefits are secured by the promise of God, and that that ought to be enough for His creatures. But experience shows that it is not enough. We are incredulous and faithless enough to distrust God, until assurance becomes doubly assuring by

the addition of a sign to the word. The senses in man's nature oftentimes take hold of an expectation more strongly than the apprehension. We believe a thing more surely from a token than from a declaration. It pleased God to give to Abraham a promise of the chartered land, but it pleased Him also to give him a view of it. Nay, more, when the bare promise passed into a ratified covenant, the words of donation were altered. "To thee will I give this land," became, "To thee have I given this land." (Gen. xv.-xvii.) Yet the land was not his for four centuries afterwards. But at the moment when that covenant was made the land was made over to him as heir of the possession, and the "burning lamp" that passed through the sacrifice was the sign and ratification of the pledge. The sun was going down when "the horror of great darkness fell upon him." It was at that moment of gloom, when no object could distinctly be seen calculated to cheer or encourage, that the revelation was made to him of the four hundred years' affliction of his descendants, of their banishment from the land on which he had set his hopes, of their degradation beneath foreign

oppression. But "when the sun had gone down," and the last moment of declining light had expired, then appeared the burning lamp that passed through the pieces of his offering. It was a whole history written in a symbolical act—an assurance visibly conveyed by a sensible token, that at "evening time it should be light" with his posterity. We know not how the patriarch read it, but taken along with prediction coincidentally delivered, it would be strange if it did not engrave on his apprehension and belief the sure deliverance that was to be the closing act of long national trial, the expectation of supernatural light which was to come to his people, when the three days' darkness fell on the land of Egypt. And we cannot doubt, that firmly as the man of God would have credited all those assurances, his perception and grasp of them must have been intensified by the "outward and visible sign" that accompanied them. No doubt, there was here no material object which survived the communication, and which could afterwards be pointed to as the perpetual pledge of its fulfilment, but yet the principle for which we contend is recognised of calling in the assist-

ance of the senses for the confirmation of abstract truth.

So, again, when God promised victory to Gideon, a sign accompanied the promise ; a sign palpable to his senses, for the fleece was wet when the ground around was dry, and the ground dry when the fleece was wet,—a double testimony additional to the prediction, lest mere accident might account for that which appeared to be supernatural. So, when the landlord delivers to his tenant the key of the tenement, he gives over the tenement itself. The simple assurance of the proprietor might, in most instances, be sufficient, but distrust is natural to man, and the “*verbum volans*” but transient, leaving on the air through which it passes no enduring characters ; so that the man feels all the more certain of his possession by closing his hand over the means and emblem of admission, and receiving a testimony from rude grasp, that his ear and recollection have not deceived him. It may not make the transaction a whit more valid or binding, but to the holder of the pledge it makes it appear so. So, when the title-deeds of an estate are delivered over, duly signed and sealed, the estate is delivered over ; and yet that



tenement may not be claimed for years, or that estate come into possession till perhaps the close of a man's life. But in holding the representative of the thing he holds the right of the thing, whenever he chooses to demand it. True, that the things done and given are but shadows, but yet they are shadows which throw an outline forward shaping out the nature of the substance. This is the view taken by our Church. In Baptism "the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of " our adoption to be the sons of God, are visibly " signed and sealed." " Sacraments are sure " witnesses of God's goodwill towards us." (Articles XXV. XXVII.)

There is one use more that Sacraments subserve. If they were no more than memorials and seals, they would not rise to the dignity of Sacraments. For, at best, the grace promised is but prospective, whereas Sacraments are conveyances or channels of grace. That is, they serve as instruments by means of which God pleases to convey the grace that man requires. That is the declaration of the Article. " Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens " of Christian men's profession, but rather they

“be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs
“of grace and God’s goodwill towards us, by
“the which he doth work invisibly in us, and
“doth not only quicken, but also strengthen
“and confirm our faith in him.” Or, in the
language of a great divine of our Church, “We
“take not Baptism or the Eucharist for mere
“resemblances or memorials of things absent,
“neither for naked signs and testimonies assur-
“ing us of grace received before, but as means
“effectual, whereby God, when we take the
“Sacrament, delivereth into our hands that grace
“available unto eternal life, which grace the
“Sacrament represents.” (Hooker, *Ecc. Pol.* v. 57.)
That is the double view taken in the Catechism
of the Church of England. “A sacrament is an
“outward and visible sign of an inward and
“spiritual grace given unto us, as a means
“whereby we receive the same, and a pledge
“to assure us thereof.” This plainly declares that
the grace expected may be immediate or pro-
spective, or both; regarded as a pledge, the
benefit implied (as in the case of the heritage of
Canaan) being a thing yet to be realised; as a
means, something which may be at once con-

ferred. It is true that the words "a means" "whereby we receive the same," may be forced to bear a prospective meaning, for the thing implied may be delivered over to be claimed and appropriated in due time. But independently of that being a strained interpretation, it would but render tautological the latter clause, which plainly has reference to the distant fulfilment of the assurance..

If we ask why it is that God pleases to make use of Sacraments as channels or instruments at all, when by a direct influence He may confer on us all we need, we are only asking why, throughout the whole of His dealings with men, He chooses to employ instruments. Man lives by means of food, yet he might live simply "by the Word of God." "Faith comes by hearing," yet faith might come without any hearing. The earth is fertilised by showers, yet God might dispense, did He so please, with the early and the latter rain. Naaman could have been healed without going into the Jordan, and the blind man without the spittle, and the Red Sea divided without the waving of Moses' rod, and the rock made to give out its streams without the stroke which cleft it,

and the apostles enabled to speak in other languages without the "tongues of fire" resting on them. But it pleased God in all these, and a thousand other instances, to work through instruments. It may be for the fuller assurance of, and in condescension to, the weakness of our faith. But this much we dare not deny, that if there be in Baptism and the Supper no grace, then the Church is without Sacraments.*

So far we have spoken of the use of Sacraments. We now turn to the consideration of their worth or value. On this point there are three schools of opinion, so broadly different from each other, that we shall hardly understand this part of our subject without adverting to them. The first of these is the extreme view of the Church of Rome, which so invests the Sacraments with an intrinsic efficacy, that by the mere administration of the ordinance grace is conveyed. This is her declaration: "If any one shall say that by "the Sacraments of the New Law, *ex opere operato*, grace is not conferred, but that faith alone "of the Divine promise suffices to the attainment "of grace, let him be accursed." That view so

* See Appendix B.

lodges the grace expected in the elements themselves, that any one who has the one has also the other; and so invests thereby the consecrated water and wafer with a mysterious virtue as to make them objects of superstitious veneration and adoration. That view our Church utterly repudiates. "As for the Sacraments," says Hooker, "they really exhibit, but for aught that we can gather out of that which is written of them, they are not really, nor do really contain in themselves that grace which with them, or by them, it pleaseth God to bestow." And equally explicit is the language of our Article: "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received is Faith." Let us pause for a moment on this view affirmed by the Church of Rome in the Decrees of Trent. It might seem, at first glance, as if all that that Church meant to assert was the necessity for an actual participation of the elements as opposed to the opinion of the Quakers, who put meditation in the place of the physical act. And if that were the point of her protest, we could in all ordinary

cases coalesce with it. For we, no more than Rome, could disregard the example and command of our Lord, who enjoined an act of eating at the time He instituted the Supper. But it seems clear from the words "*ex opere operato*" that that is not the point of contrast she labours to establish. Her words are evidently built on the antecedent belief that the elements contain the efficacy. In truth, she could not well hold the doctrine of transubstantiation, and come to any other conclusion. But that makes the Sacraments far more than channels or instruments of grace; it makes them authors of grace, if not grace itself. It so localizes the efficacy as to bring a man who partakes of the sign outward, into necessary contact with the benefit inward. That is just the turning-point of the difference of opinion between Rome and the Churches who dissent from her communion. She locates power, and even Deity, in the outward emblem; we hold power to reside in God, who may, or may not, communicate it through or without the emblem. She would make Jordan, ever and to all, a health-bestowing stream, so that all who bathed therein became "*ex opere operato*" healed of whatsoever

disease they had; we make it available for that result whenever it pleases God to make its waters efficacious. She makes the Eucharist a necessary communication of Christ to the recipient; we limit its benefits to "the faithful," and even in them, dependent on the free favour of God. And, that we hold no necessary impregnation of the elements with a mysterious, intrinsic virtue, is clear from this, that our Church rules that if a sick man, "from lack of company, or any other just impediment, do not receive the Sacrament . . . yet if he truly repent him of his sins, and steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death on the cross for him . . . he doth eat and drink the body and blood of Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth."


There is an extreme view in the opposite direction. At the Reformation, men, recoiling from Rome and her superstitions, rushed into mere rationalism. Because Rome claimed too much for the Sacraments, the Church of Zurich under Zuinglius claimed too little. It held that the Sacraments were "bare and naked signs," "mere memorials" and representations, useful

for suggestions, but useless for grace. And in this respect that Church stood aloof from all her sisters of the Reformation. While Calvin claimed for Baptism to be "the ordinary instrument of "regeneration and renewal," Zuinglius claimed for it nothing but a testimony to the corruption of man, made it a standing protest against man, and expected from it nothing efficacious for him. This was the view put forward by that eminent, but prejudiced and eccentric reformer: "The bread and "wine in the Eucharist are no more than external "signs or symbols, designed to excite in the mind "of Christians the remembrance of the sufferings "and death of the divine Saviour, and of the "benefits which arise from it." Of course, if this view be maintained, the rites called Sacraments cease to be Sacraments.

The medium view is that held by our own Church. It lodges no virtue in the elements themselves, as Hooker and our Articles above have testified. It affirms no invariable efficacy, as though, at every time when the ordinance is administered, grace must necessarily flow from it. It establishes no such indissoluble connexion between the sign and the thing signified as that the one must be

where the other is, but places the efficacy of the ordinance in the free blessing of God, attracted (if we may use the expression) by the spiritual condition of the worshipper. If we cross that line we fasten God to the necessary efficacy of His own ordinance, and take the first step towards superstition and creature-worship. The efficacy of the Sacraments according to the view of the Church of England, though different as to its nature and degree, is similar with the efficacy of prayer, the reading of the Bible, and the laying on of hands in Confirmation. Prayer, to the prayerless, is but the utterance of words. The study of the Bible to the formal, is but the reading of a book; and the imposition of hands in Confirmation, to the careless, but a ceremony. Let grace promised be met by grace expected, prayed for, longed for, and we have every ground for believing that it will come. But were it otherwise, and that the act carried necessarily with it the blessing, we should have no longer God, but ordinances, the centre of grace and power to His people. We do not say that the benefits which reach the soul through the Sacraments may not be of a different order from those which flow from these means. Very

possibly, they are different both as to their modes of working and as to the character of the grace which they convey. For prayer and the searching of the Scriptures are both of them the acts of intelligent and conscious beings, the one the intercourse of an awakened soul with God, and the other, the intercourse of a God in Revelation with one who is seeking after Him. But we can conceive of an order or kind of grace different from these, such as the light that falls on the dark soul guiding it into Truth, and the strength that falls on one, whose infantile intellectual powers do not extend beyond the feeblest recognition of external objects; such as the power which reached the disciples at the moment of their call, and the more mysterious power which "filled the Baptist with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." But in any such cases, the efficacy granted flows not from the administration of an ordinance, but from His might and uncontrolled favour, "who gives to every one severally as He will." If from that view we depart, we drop at once into superstition, for if we honour not "the Creator more than the creature," at least, we place it on a level with Him. The true



centre of all independent power can never be displaced, without dislocating the whole moral system. To do it, is—to speak by illustration—to break the mysterious relations which hold constellations in their orbits, and to introduce, not harmony but disturbance into the wonderful works of God.

CHAPTER II.


THE BENEFITS OF BAPTISM.

WE have so far cleared the way for the consideration of another point, the benefits to be derived from Baptism—the point that places us face to face with our accusers. There can be no question that whatever other advantages flow from this Sacrament, that of incorporation with, and admission to, the Church must necessarily take a first position. A community there is upon earth standing apart and distinguished from the mass of men, by profession, by privileges, and by hopes, to which we give the title of the Church of Christ; a community which is each day receiving fresh accessions to its numbers, and that through the ordinance of Baptism. For our Lord plainly made that the door of admission to those privileges when He Himself accepted Baptism, and afterwards commissioned His Apostles to “baptize

“all nations.” It is to that admission and incorporation that the words of our Catechism point, when they declare the new-made Christian to be “a member of Christ, a child of God, and “an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,”—words which have drawn down on themselves at all times the full torrent of dissenting vituperation. If it be dreadful to baptize a child at all, it is absolutely awful to declare it, or make it declare itself, “a member of Christ, and a child of God, “and an inheritor of His Kingdom.” Expressions, these which are assumed to signify that “union with Christ, which is no mean spiritual gift,” and that adoption into God’s saved family, which necessarily tends to a participation of the heavenly inheritance. We are told that such words “admit of no dispute.” Possibly, but they are capable of dishonourable misrepresentation.


There is no doubt that these are titles of high distinction, expressive of great privileges, and pointing forward to great expectations. But there is also no doubt, that in the well-read and deep-thinking times at which they were introduced into our Catechism, there was little danger

of their being misunderstood. For in those days, men professing to be teachers were scholars and theologians, men whose creed was not formed on any narrow school of opinion, but based on the grand conclusions which arose from a thoughtful study of the word of God. That is apparent, not only from the solid character of the theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but from the masterly Confessions of Faith drawn up and accepted at those periods. It will be found on an examination of these Confessions, which may be taken as the condensed expression of well-considered opinions, that the views of the Apostolic Epistles were recognised by them all as the true foundations of theological systems. And then, men found no difficulty in affirming all the baptized members of a Christian Church to be "Christ's members and God's children." Yet, if any of them had been charged, (as the Church of England has been charged) with holding that the mere act of baptism grafted men spiritually on Christ, gave to every baptized man the spirit of adoption, and assured him, as by an indefeasible right, of heaven, they would have been restrained from repudiating the imputation with scorn,



only by their incapacity to find words to convey their amazement at the ignorance which it disclosed. For the idea which pervaded all the Churches of those days, was that of a double kingdom of Christ—one a kingdom of mere profession, and the other a kingdom of spiritual efficacy; the one composed of members nominal, and the other of members real. If the kingdom was likened to a field of wheat and tares, it was also declared to be “righteousness and peace.” They called every baptized man a Christian, not because he was therefore a true follower of Christ, but because he professed to be so; and on the strength of that profession, they held him entitled to the name. It might be, and it was largely the case, that multitudes walked not “worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called;” but it *was* their vocation, and conveyed the designation accordingly. It lay with their Master, when He comes in to see the guests, to recognise or to repudiate the value of the profession. All that they, or any fallible men, knew, was, that they claimed it—not capriciously or independently of anything constituting the ground of a claim—but because, in the way of Christ’s own appointment, they had


been admitted into the fellowship of professed believers. Doubtless, there might have been then scrupulous men, hypercritical men, who would have denied them the title, because, to their judgments, it did not stand united with the implied reality; but it was not for them to deprive them of it, until by some flagrant act, (such as avowed heresy, or repudiation of the faith,) they stripped themselves so unmistakeably of all shadow of pretension to the name, that it had been blasphemy to continue it to them. But while they thus asserted a visible Church composed necessarily of saints and sinners, of God's dear children and of unworthy children, of those who loved Him and those who loved Him not, of those who had a name and something more and others who had the name and nothing more; they also asserted an invisible Church, the "general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names were written," not in baptismal registers only, but in that heaven, to which some were travelling, and from which others were as decidedly retroceding. Nevertheless, while both these sections were here in the land of profession, probation and preparation, but not of classifica-




tion and separation; they gave to them, one and all, the name to which Baptism had entitled them. For, were they not in the Church; had they not entered it by the lawful door; did they not continue to carry on their phylacteries the name of Christ; did they not (most or many of them) take their places in Christian assemblies, and would they not have repudiated with vehemence the despotism of any who dared to wrest their titles from them? It were as monstrous to deprive them of their baptismal title, as to take from any circumcised Jew the name of Israel, till he had been cut off from the congregation. It might be,—it must have been, that they were told often, that, in the higher signification, those titles were not theirs, that they were “blaspheming that “worthy name by which they were called,” that they should “change either their name or their “morals.” But, for all that, the nominal distinction was theirs. If men denied it to them, they had but to exhibit their certificate of Baptism, and ask the remonstrants, whether their right to the name—the advantages and privileges are other matters—were not as good as their own. And after that, the only point to be settled was

this, whether in giving such men the honour even of an appellation, the law and usage of inspiration were violated or not? We apprehend that we shall find on examination, that they were not. Now, this distinction, seemingly so simple, is one which some minds appear utterly incompetent to comprehend; at least, that is the most charitable interpretation to put on the fact that it is overlooked in the charges advanced against the Church. The other alternative of supposing that men are aware of that which they affect to be ignorant, is one which gives them credit for intelligence at the expense of probity.

Nevertheless, as there is a certain plausibility in the objection to the words of our Catechism, we shall endeavour to show their perfect harmony with the ordinary usage of terms, as well as with the language of Scripture. Every one at all accustomed to the study of the use of words knows well, that the same expression is oftentimes employed, not only in totally different senses, but in different shades of the same general sense. The word "scholar" may be applied to a school-boy who is learning his rudiments, or to the highly educated man who has learned almost everything. The term "Father"



may be applied to God in the broad sense of being Creator of all things, or in the narrower sense of being the reconciled Father of His children through Christ. The term "believer" may be applied to men, who simply accept as reasonable and certain the dogmas of Revelation, totally independently of any moral effect on their souls, and also applied to those who are clinging tenaciously to God's promises in Christ for all that is precious. For, a man who passes from scepticism or infidelity to a deliberate reception of the truths of inspiration, is entitled to his new name of a "believer," and yet clearly in a sense vastly inferior to that in which we bestow the same phrase on one "who with the heart believes to righteousness." The one state is the product of intellect, the other of a changed heart. Instances such as these might be multiplied to any extent, for nothing is more common than the higher and lower senses of the self-same expression. We are, however, more nearly concerned in showing that the authorities of our Church are in harmony with the usage of Scripture. Each man conversant with the New Testament must be aware that, among the many figures employed to denote the Church of Christ,



none are of more frequent occurrence than those of an organized body, a family, and, as in the case of Israel, the claimants of a promised heritage. In the Apostolic Epistles, the first of these images again and again meets us: "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another;" "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular;" "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." There is no necessity for pausing on the appropriateness of the figure thus used. The organization, the proportions, the distribution of powers, the adaptation of parts to peculiar functions, their union with a common head, the action and reaction of different organs on each other and the effect on the whole, sufficiently attest the consummate fitness of a body to represent that corporation which we popularly designate as the Church. But the point which peculiarly demands our consideration is this, that this membership is predicated, not of select sections, but of the whole community. Writing to an entire Church, be it of Rome, Ephesus, or Galatia, the apostle affirms it of all the component parts of those Churches. He stops not to


distinguish, or to limit the application of that membership to the truly faithful and the religiously consistent, but boldly confers it on all. For, impossible it is to understand in an eclectic sense, the addresses, "The saints in Ephesus and "the faithful in Christ," "All that be in Rome, "beloved of God, called to be saints."* Letters bearing these superscriptions were surely the property of the whole community. If not, who were to claim them as exclusively their own? And if that be so, as surely this membership was predicated of the whole Church without discrimination, in virtue of the name they bore and the profession they were led to make. And yet, if we come to examine the moral condition of these Churches, we shall find evidence enough to convince us, that of their members were many linked to Christ by no true spiritual ties, connected with Him by no vital union. Ephesus and Galatia both needed to be admonished on the grounds of doctrinal and moral declension, and Corinth was an open scandal to Christianity. Yet to these wrote Paul, "We are members of His body, of His

* See also Rom. ix. 25; xi. 28.


"flesh, and of His bones." Nay, we may rise a step higher in our instances, and appeal to the words of our Lord Himself. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away." What! branches in Christ that bear no fruit? We have been told that "union with Christ is no mean spiritual gift." Granted; but what if there be two kinds of union—one outward and professional, and one inward and spiritual; for "they are not all Israel which are of Israel." Yet though this distinction is manifest to most men, it does not suit prejudice and passion to see it. It is easier to deal in declamation, and protest against "villains, burglars, forgers," being considered the members of Christ. Yet so they are—if baptized into His body—in the same sense in which the schismatic, incestuous, and profane Corinthians were members of Christ. That Paul never meant to affirm the latter to be "spiritual" members is certain, and that the Church never meant to affirm the former to be "spiritual" members is certain also. Yet both call them "members." If the equivocation of the accusation be not incomprehensible obtuseness, it is contemptible artifice. It will hardly be denied that

Judas, Ananias, Sapphira, were members of Christ, and hardly affirmed that they were "spiritual" ones.

We may take the same line of reply with regard to the second term, "children of God." There is no question at all between ourselves and those who object to the language of our formularies on the point of true sonship. No doubt there is a state recognised in Scripture, of true moral affinity between God and His creatures. If it were not so, we should not have the birth, parentage and features of that condition in St. John's Gospel, or its emotions sketched in the epistle to the Romans. The one speaks of sons who were "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," and bestows on such the description of being "receivers of Christ and believers in the name of Christ." The other affirms of those "who are led by the Spirit of God, that they are the sons of God," men who "had not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption." Of course we recognise in such passages as these the great truth, that God has a family, whose members are His children, not in name or possible



prospects, but in virtue of such a transformation being effected in their characters and such a change made in their natures, as assimilates them to His own nature and character. But that is not the question at issue. The point for which we contend is this, that as there is a visible and invisible Church, so there is a circle within a circle, the larger embracing members titular, the smaller confined to members real. In other words, that until men determine it otherwise for themselves, the privileges of the Church invisible are predicable of the Church visible. Whenever men finally and conclusively show that those mercies put within their reach have not been seized and appropriated by them, then will even the titular distinction drop off, and they shall stand revealed in the utter nothingness of an unused profession. Meanwhile, on the score of admission into the visible community of professors, who own, at least, God as their Father; the name of "children" appertains to them. And it is strange that to nominal Christians the title should be denied by any who are scrupulous as to the right use of Scripture language, when it is clear that, simply on the same grounds, it is invariably bestowed on all



the community of Israel. The history of that people and the admonitions of their prophets, sufficiently declare their backslidings, idolatries, ungodliness and provocations, and yet hesitate not to continue to them the title. Was it to some only, or also to all, that the words apply, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son;" "Israel is my son, my first-born: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me." Is the summons issued to a select few, which commands "the north and the south to bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth?" Is the consolation particular or national, which says, "O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Passages these, one and all, asserting sonship, and that in reference to a mixed multitude of a professing people. And it is precisely on the same ground, not of moral likeness, but of covenant relationship, that Paul tells all the members of a Church confessedly in a backsliding condition, "Ye are all the children of God by faith (through the faith) in Christ Jesus." Into that faith had all the Galatians been baptized; into God's family on earth, all

admitted, and in virtue of their Church standing, entitled to the appellation. That every individual in the Church of Galatia was a child of God in the spiritual sense, no one, we think, will be bold enough to affirm. For that were to say, that a field there was in which there were no tares among the wheat, a large community in which there was not one single ungodly man. To maintain that would be to say that Paul succeeded better in his husbandry than Christ, for of His "twelve, one was a devil." Is it a matter utterly unintelligible, that a child, and a godly child, are not the same thing; that a child as to position there may be who is not a child in disposition? Was Esau not the child of Isaac because he was profane, or the younger son no relation to his father because prodigal, or Amnon and Absalom not David's children because treasonable and incestuous, or Hophni and Phinehas not Eli's children because profligate and rapacious, or Manasseh not Hezekiah's child because an idolater? If I am asked to declare them creditable children, godly children, honourable to their parents, and a lustre to the Church and nation to which they belonged, I refuse to


do so; but if I am asked to confess them children of their respective fathers, I am prepared to do it; for I can draw the distinction between a child as to standing, and a child as to moral likeness. And if I am asked to affirm that all who are admitted into the family of God on earth by Baptism are, therefore, children bearing a moral likeness to Him, and the "dear children" whom He will own hereafter as His chosen ones, I decline to utter anything so untrue. But if I am asked to give those duly admitted into the family the title of children, I am ready to do so, for it is one to which they have a right. They may disgrace their Father's name, do dishonour to their sacred position, put in peril their prospects, and sadden the hearts of their brethren, but they are of the ecclesiastical family notwithstanding. Aye, as surely as Esau was Isaac's child, though he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.

The explanation and defence of the term "inheritor of the kingdom of heaven" stands almost on the same ground, only differing from the two former in this respect, that the advantages spoken of are prospective. The title Inheritor follows naturally and necessarily from the title

"child." It were unworthy of God to admit a man into His family without proffering to him an inheritance. And we hold that to every baptized man, admitted thereby to membership and family, there is presented a prospect of the provision made by the Father for His children. Were it otherwise, Baptism would be meaningless, as far as bearing on privileges and prospects. The man outside the family is in as fair a position as the man within. "What profit is there in circumcision?" But surely it is but poor reasoning to affirm that, because a man has prospects, therefore he is sure to have the realisation of his prospects. Many a man has begun life with bright and reasonable ones, and ended it with nothing. Many a man has an estate left him, and squandered it before he has well reached his majority. For the substantiation of prospects depends on the fulfilment of conditions, and if they be unfulfilled, the prospect is nothing but an unrealised vision. The Birthright and the Promise dependent on it, were Esau's in virtue of his position as the first-born in Isaac's house, and yet he never succeeded to either. Canaan was Israel's, and yet Israel, above the age of twenty, fell in

the wilderness. The eldest son of our monarch is the heir-apparent to the throne, and yet his succession depends on regard to the Act of Settlement. And if the mere term be objected to, let us remember that "the Gentiles were fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the same promises," and yet many of them have put these honours far from them, and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. It is one thing to have documents of value put into our hands, and another thing to convert them into property. The one depends on God's fatherly consideration, the other, under God, on our faithfulness and earnestness in "laying hold on eternal life."

We return from this digression — a necessary one, on account of the senseless exception which has been taken to these expressions of our Catechism — to the main point, the benefits of Baptism. If the first of these be Incorporation into the mystical body and professing family of Christ, the second is the removal of that imputed guilt which rests upon us, as children of a disloyal parent. Totally distinct is this from that "infection of nature" which we inherit from a



vitiating origin. The one is, if not washed away, at least subdued and checked by sanctification; for that is the object of the prayer, "that all things belonging to the flesh may die in us, and all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in us;" the other is removed in Baptism. For then we enter into a new relation with God, disowning the old stock, and attaching ourselves to a new one.* It may seem strange at first that, even to the extent of imputed culpability, the "children should bear the iniquity of the fathers." But, after all, it is but analogous to that which every day occurs among us. The poverty-stricken child bears on him the consequences of his father's recklessness. The attainder of treason, which rested on some disloyal ancestor in centuries past, stripping him of estate, of position, and of peerage, falls on his descendants. There seems to be no question that "by the disobedience of one many were made sinners,"—not by the transmission of a corrupt nature only, but by the imputation of the guilt of broken fealty—not by tendencies

* See Appendix C.

conveyed by the blood, but by criminality attached to condition. I know that this, as well as every other guilt, must be washed away by the precious blood that cleanseth from all sin, but I think also that a connexion must also be established with Christ before we can be partakers of the benefit. And, in the absence of conscious application to the "fountain opened for uncleaness," I know of no ordinance provided for the removal of that guilt on the infant but that which symbolises the expurgation of it. Admitting that the words, "sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin," may have a prospective import, it seems to me that they imply besides, a present benefit—even the obliteration of the attainder under which every child of Adam enters into this world. And most natural it is that it should be so, when we remember that that very act of baptism is a renunciation of the first Adam, and the claiming of the love and mercy of the second. I say nothing with regard to the condition of those who die without that appeal made for the removal of imputed guilt; for our knowledge of God is of a God in covenant with His creatures, and things uncovenanted

lie altogether outside of the communications of Revelation. Only thus much we say, that the early writers seem to have held this view, and that Christ commanded little children to come to Him, and to be forbidden not.*

We come to a third benefit of Baptism, in the prospective advantages it conveys. Whatever it may effect at the time of administration, there is no doubt that, recognising the baptized one as admitted into the family and fellowship of Christianity, it puts into his hands the title-deeds of his new-born expectations. In this light it acts as a seal and pledge of good things promised, of blessings to come, lying, it may be, afar off on the path of a man's earthly existence, which he may reach in time and claim as his own, on the ground that a covenant-keeping God has solemnly made them over to him. But yet, let no man misunderstand us as holding therefore, that "Baptism saves." Salvation lies not simply in the offer or even prospect of blessings, but in the conferring and reception of blessings. A man may be rich as to the first, and an absolute beggar as to the second. For "God may call, and man may re-

* See Chapter vi. for a fuller consideration of this point.

“fuse. He may stretch out His hand, and man “may not regard.” What then? Why, that the possibility of mercy has lain at his door, and that, in madness or ignorance, he has spurned it from him. The torn or cancelled cheque yields no money; the unclaimed dividend confers no wealth; the unused medicine relieves no malady. Nevertheless they have been placed in the man’s hands to be used, or misused, or non-used, according to his own wisdom or folly. But it were the very most palpable falsehood to affirm, that because a man has received assurances and pledges he has therefore received the thing to which these pledges point. That is the libel against which our Church has ever protested, against which her detractors know she has protested, and which, with equal audacity and untruth, it suits their unworthy tactics to repeat. Would that they would prescribe to themselves the wholesome exercise of preaching a homily on the text, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy “neighbour.” To a thoughtless man it is perhaps little that at his Baptism these pledges have been deposited with him, and the assurance given of a “promise which God for his part will


“most surely keep and perform.” But to a man desirous of salvation, that is, of converting a possibility into a certainty, an assurance into a substance, it ought to be a vast encouragement that for all he asks at the throne of grace he has in his hands the signed pledges of a covenant-respecting God. We know, of course, that independent of such baptismal assurances, he has the more certain warrantry of the whole word of God, and we know that that ought to be enough to satisfy a man’s faith and stimulate his efforts. But we know also, as has before been urged, that the very application of those inspired assurances to his own self at his baptism, is, or ought to be, a great assurance to his faith. And if he doubt, as men have doubted, whether the promises of the Scriptures are for him, we can take him to his baptismal certificate, tell him that at such a time he entered into covenant with God, tell him that God is faithful to His declarations, tell him that, although the door of mercy may be closed, the key lies in his own hands, bid him, “Seek, and he shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto him.”

We come, lastly, to the remaining benefit at-

tached to Baptism, and with it to the last display of ignorance that in this chapter we purpose to notice. We stand charged, with holding, as a Church, judged of by her own documents, that Baptism bestows regeneration, and, as ministers, with disbelieving it altogether.* The one is assumed to be a fact, because in the Baptismal Service, baptism is associated with regeneration, it being also assumed that regeneration in modern definition is the same thing as regeneration in the Church of England signification. The other — a grave charge advanced without even an attempt at proof, or a line of quotation in its support,—an accusation of deliberate perjury, committed under the force of the most sordid considerations, and advanced against some thousands of the ministers of our Church, is no trivial or ordinary one, and ought to be capable of the most conclusive demonstration. Expressions, which form its foundation ought to be well defined, their meaning agreed upon by the conflicting parties, and evidence adduced of their adoption in the same sense in which they are said to have been repudiated. If this has not been done, the laws of controversy have

* See Preface.

been most dishonourably infringed. Were it not well, prudent, safe, candid, scholarly, for men, before uttering accusations, to have done themselves and others the duty of ascertaining the meaning of words—to have even asked whether their sense of the word “regeneration” was that of the Church of England? We have traced utter incapacity to distinguish between the different imports of the same word in the instance of “members” and “children;” and these charges afford but another humbling illustration of the same astonishing misapprehension. Let us look at the matter critically and calmly. Men know—most men know—that words do sometimes change their signification, and advance beyond their original meaning. We have in our Liturgy the words “sore let and hindered,” and “prevent us in all our doings.” I suppose there is no one so ignorant as to understand these words in their present acceptation. So the word “wealth,” now signifying riches, of old signified simply “welfare.” There are many words in the writers of the Tudor age which meant things very different from those which they mean now. How, then, are we to determine their import? Surely by ascertaining their sense in writings or




documents of the same time as that in which they were used. At least that would be the course likely to be taken by men of research, inquiry and candour. And such would, without much pains, have discovered that the word "regeneration" had changed its import at least four times in the history of religious terms. For example, turn we to the word as found in Scripture. There it is used but twice, once in Matt. xix. 28, and again in Tit. iii. 5. The first passage has nothing to do with the subject: "Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." There, it plainly means either the general resurrection or the restitution of all things: the passing of the world into a new condition. The second passage bears much on our subject: "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." In that verse it is clearly associated with baptism, for the "washing of regeneration" is more strictly "the laver of regeneration." Yet, say our detractors, "How could Christ connect regeneration with a peculiar application of aque-

"ous fluid," viz. water. That question we must leave to St. Paul and Titus to answer. Doubtless, they and the large body of deluded men called the Fathers of the Church who followed them, were all equally in error. It may be said, that the passage has no reference to baptism at all. Perhaps so, yet not only the Fathers thought it had, but Matthew Henry the non-conformist, the Westminster Confession of Faith and Calvin, thought it had. "I cannot doubt," said the Genevese reformer, "but that the reference of the passage is to baptism." "Baptism," wrote Matthew Henry, "is here called the washing of regeneration." So far, therefore, we have advanced as to discover that the word is Scriptural, and that in some sense it is associated with baptism.

Now, in examining the changes in signification which this word, in the lapse of time, has undergone, we shall turn to the more modern and extreme one first. It is undoubtedly the case, that a large class of modern writers and preachers have allowed themselves to use the term as synonymous with conversion. There is a religious state into which men pass, by the action of the

Spirit of power on their souls, which is as much a contrast to their former condition, as is light to darkness, or life to death. The religious faculties and emotions which have been in a condition of death-like lethargy or torpor, have been roused into apprehension and activity by a spiritual energy which is supernatural. "They have been "blind and now see," "dead in trespasses and "now quickened," "lost and now found," "without God in the world" and now claimed by Him. In a word, they have become unlike their former selves, or in Scripture phraseology, "new creatures "in Christ Jesus," for "old things have passed "away, and all things have become new." Opinions, tastes, estimates, feelings, objects, habits, have so undergone a change, that they may be said to "have passed from death unto life." If it were not that inaccuracy in the application of terms has been the cause of great misapprehension of men's views and great misconstruction of a Church's doctrine, it would be hardly worth while to debate the point, whether this should be called Regeneration, or Renewal, or Conversion. But, clearly, if that state, including within itself so much of the powers and actions of spiritual life,



has been rightly called regeneration, or even if it represented the idea attached to the word regeneration at the time when our formularies were composed, the question ceases to be one merely of terminology, and rises to the importance of one of doctrine. We apprehend that it will be found, on careful examination of the writings of other days, that the word, as employed in the modern and popular sense, is made to express far more than it did express in past times. Probably (for on a matter connected with the use and abuse of words and the changes to which a thing so fluctuating as language is subject, it is difficult to be precise), that enlarged and inaccurate use of the term does not go back further than about two hundred years. It seems to have come in at that period, when the nation, rising out of Laudian views, was disposed to espouse the system of the Puritans, which dealt less with matters of Church efficacy, and more with points entering into individual emotions and experiences. The phrase "new birth" represented—however inaccurately—still graphically enough, that immediate change, which "translated a man from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of God's children." And in all

this, there was nothing absolutely objectionable, bearing however in mind two things; first, that an inaccurate use of a term is always likely to be dangerous, and secondly, that it is positively unfair and unscholarly to indict a man under one sense of a word, who happened to employ it in another. That might be right according to the Jewish craft, which found our Lord guilty of threatening to "destroy the temple," when He spake simply of His body, but is hardly consistent with the rectitude of Christians.

We have looked at the modern, and (as we must call it) the exaggerated view of this disputed word—exaggerated, because we shall find, that it amounts to a vast enlargement of the former ideas attached to it. And we shall turn to the other limit of our inquiry, for the purpose of determining the sense in which it was employed by the writers of the first ages of Christianity. On reference to the great authorities of the first four centuries, we shall find reason for concluding that regeneration with them was a simple synonym of Baptism. Carried back into its broadest application, it was a change, a reconstruction, a renewal of anything; let the subject


of that change have been animate or inanimate, physical or moral.* And therefore do we find that the Fathers of the Christian Church put this sense on the word, that regeneration was the passing of a man into a new ecclesiastical state or relation, by means of baptism. We wish it to be observed that we bring not forward these authorities as expounders of doctrine, but only as employers of terms. Not as theologians, but as philologists do we use them, for we are simply investigating the meaning of a word. In the year 140, Justin Martyr wrote thus of the habits of the Christians, "We then bring them to some place where there is water, and they are regenerated by the same way of regeneration by which we were regenerated, for they are washed with water in the name of God the Father and Lord of all things, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit." In the year 167, Irenæus wrote, "When He gave His disciples the commission of regenerating unto God, He said to them, Go and teach all nations, baptizing them," &c. In 210, Origen wrote, "Whether they (angels) take the care and management of

* See Abp. Trench on the Study of Words.



“ them from the time when they, by the washing
“ of regeneration whereby they are new born, do,
“ as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of
“ the word,” &c. In 250, Cyprian wrote, “ If
“ any man be not baptized and regenerate, he
“ cannot come to the kingdom of God.” In 360,
Gregory Nazianzen wrote, “ Religion teaches us
“ that there are three kinds of generation or for-
“ mation, that of our bodies, that of baptism, and
“ that of resurrection.” I do not suppose we
need pursue these citations further. One thing
is clear from them, that they, one and all, connect
regeneration with baptism. And another thing
is as clear, that the sense they attached to re-
generation was that of an introduction into
Christianity, the passing into a new condition and
the establishment of new relations.

In a subsequent part of this work, there will
be occasion to return to this point, and therefore it
is unnecessary to dwell upon it here, observing only,
in passing, that one passage from Clemens Alex-
andrinus, in which that Father affirms Regenera-
tion of our Lord while treating of His baptism,
seems utterly to shut out the idea of any necessary
moral benefit being attached to it. For the very



point of that writer is to show the perfection of the nature of our Lord, a doctrine altogether inconsistent with the notion of conversion or moral improvement.

We pass on to the consideration of a period lying between these two extremes of times Patristic and Puritan—the period, when after the death-like silence of the middle ages, religious intelligence and thought began to struggle into life again. Then we find that the word had taken up into itself an additional idea, engrafting on that of incorporation or admission into the Church, that of the implantation of a moral or spiritual power, the introduction of a germ or spark of spiritual life, which was to be the object and foundation of all the Christian solicitude and education afterwards bestowed on the baptized infant. And yet, let us carefully note that there is a very broad difference between this idea, and the notion of that full development and manifestation of spiritual life, which properly should be called Conversion. The spark of physical life in a babe is a very different thing from the manhood of the full-grown being. A seed, a germ of life there is in the one, delicate, tender, feeble, which

ill-usage and even neglect, will destroy. An independence and fulness there is in the other, which fits it to battle with the world, breast its trials, and struggle through its difficulties. And there is little doubt that it was in this double sense of incorporation and implantation, that the word was used in the early days of the Reformation; the compilers of our Liturgy, and the authors of our Articles contending for more in baptism than the mere registration of a child as a member of the religious community, even although that act of admission into the visible Church carried with it the seals and pledges of prospective blessings. The language of our Service appears to contemplate the conveyance of a present privilege, obviously built on the principle expressed in the prayer of thanksgiving, "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit." But widely, essentially different is that sense from the broader one into which the word passed in the times of the Puritans; and very different is the view which regards Baptism as an instrument which God may employ for the conveyance of His grace, and that which


makes it the necessary cause and effectual fountain of Regeneration. If the Church of England held the extreme and extended view—which is a misapprehension of the term, and an exaggeration of the original idea; and if she held that God's grace once given never was recalled or expired,—then, with some show of reason, might men conclude that she taught the saving power of Baptism. But if the Church's view be the Reformational and not the Puritanic one, (with which latter we have nought to do) then it is indifferent logic and ignorant—if not dishonest—aspersion to charge us with affirming that which we never declared we held. I say not, that members of the Church may not, from the study of the divines of the seventeenth century, have insensibly adopted their language when addressing adult congregations, and employed incautiously the word Regeneration to express what they meant by conversion, although never meaning to attach that sense to the word, when used in respect to infants. But that is no reason for branding a very large section of our ministers with “immorality, dishonesty, “and falsehood.”

It may be that some men may quarrel with this

position of things, and, in their zeal for the action of the sovereign grace of God, contend that nothing but admission to privileges is granted in Baptism. We say in reply, that if that be so, there is no Sacrament of Baptism, for a Sacrament possesses inward grace as well as outward sign. If it wants the former, as Zuinglius taught, then it loses its sacramental character altogether, and then, indeed, on a broad and intelligible point, do such stand at variance with our Homilies, Catechism, and Articles. The simple fact appears to be that, because a false and exaggerated sense has been put by others on a particular expression, men have been apprehensive of using it in reference to Baptism. But "why am I to be "judged of" by other men's exaggerations, or hindered from employing a phrase in my own sense, because other men employed it in theirs? Not ours the fault or the apparent contradiction, but theirs. We have somewhat to do with the phraseology of the early writers, and much to do with that of the compilers of our services, but nothing at all to do with the Puritans and their followers. Let them employ "New Birth,"—which yet is not life, nor the development of life,


but the introduction of a creature into a new phase and order of existence—let them employ the words in their own acceptation, if they will, but we are not bound by that. Our business is not to pass over to their lines, but to retreat on our own; to stand side by side, not with Calamy or Baxter, Owen or Howe, but with Cranmer, Latimer, and Jewell; to assert as boldly and frequently as we may, the necessity of men passing from condemnation to pardon, from corruption to holiness, from danger to a “good hope through grace,” but to be careful that we use not terms which put us apparently in conflict with our services. Regeneration in the Puritanic sense we do not predicate of Baptism; Regeneration, in the Reformational sense, we do. But, we utterly refuse to allow ourselves to be arraigned on a false indictment, and brought in guilty because our accusers descend to equivocation.

With the same explicitness we would repudiate the calumny, that we hold that “Baptism saves.” Never have we maintained it. That it puts man in the way of salvation (as it put those “whom the Lord added daily to the Church,”) by admitting them to covenant mercies, bringing



them under Christian culture, and investing them with a right to privileges, we fully confess and without hesitation affirm. And in that sense we but repeat the words of St. Peter when he wrote, "The like figure, whereunto even baptism, doth also now save." But to the supposition that we hold Baptism to be so endowed with an absolute and inherent efficacy, necessarily terminating in a man's salvation, let the single fact of the ministrations of our pastors be the reply. For what, Sunday after Sunday, are the ministers of the Church of England doing but warning their congregations to "flee from the wrath to come,"—but telling them that the curse of a broken law is hanging over their heads; that unless they repent they must perish; that unless they believe, they cannot appropriate the merits of the Saviour; that there is salvation in no one and no thing but Christ alone; that, if they expect to be justified, they must close with the offers of mercy made by a loving God through a crucified Redeemer? This is the purport, the character, and the burden of our ministry. And if all this be not enough to convince men that no minister of the Church holds the saving power of Baptism in the sense in

which that expression is imputed to him, let the Homilies, the Liturgy, and the Articles put to shame the unworthy and dishonest accusation. With such words as these uttered by whole congregations each Sabbath-day, "By Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death and burial, good Lord, deliver us," with such declarations as these affirmed by all our ministers at their ordination,—“We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith,”—can it for a moment be conceived that either pastors or people are believers in the doctrine of the saving efficacy of Baptism? Nay, we can give a more solemn refutation still, for we can ask any who entertain the lingering shadow of a doubt as to our opinions, to accompany us to the open grave of some departed brother and bid him listen to these words, “We humbly beseech Thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness.” If that be done once and for ever at Baptism, what need is there that up to the last we require the crucifixion of the old nature and the development of the new?



CHAPTER III.


OBJECTIONS TO INFANT BAPTISM.

THE proofs brought forward in the last chapter, will probably have been sufficient to convince any person of thoughtfulness and candour that the error which lies at the root of all the unmerited censure cast on the Church of England, lies in an entire, perhaps wilful, misconception of the word Regeneration. If that word, as used by the early writers, meant no more than the process of Baptism, by which a person is born into new relations, hopes and duties; taken, as it were, out of a condition of hopelessness, and introduced into one of privilege and expectation; then, beyond doubt, the charge which made her express what she meant not to express falls to the ground under the force of simple explanation. And, even if we extend that ecclesiastical idea, by supposing that the formal introduction into this new con-

dition is attended by the implantation of a seed or germ of spiritual life in answer to faith and prayer, yet that additional feature does not bring regeneration up to the idea of that full development and maturity of life which more properly should be termed Conversion. That the compilers of our Services never could have contemplated the later and more modern sense of the word, confounding the infancy of life with its vigorous powers, is clear enough from the consideration that unconscious infants could never have been supposed capable of those emotions and demonstrations of the life of God in the soul, which commence with faith and repentance. That a germ of life, the basis and the encouragement of Christian culture, may, through neglect or mismanagement, expire, or, through carelessness on the part of parents and sponsors lie dormant,—that is possible enough; for if “the gift that is in us” be not stirred up, it is not likely to exhibit itself at all. But mismanagement on the part of man is one thing, and mercy intended by God is another thing. All we at present contend for is this, that we never intended to affirm that a child is, at baptism, born into the possession of religious faculties and

powers, although born into new relations and hopes; and that we ought not to have been indicted for insincerity for expressing that which we did not believe. In a word, the entire case has been mistaken from recklessness or ignorance, or worse.

In this chapter I mean to enter into the discussion of another point of perhaps greater importance still, for the management of our subject leads me to consider the whole subject of Infant Baptism — a subject on which we stand at issue, not with individuals, but with an entire religious system. The silence and moderation of the Church of England in these days sufficiently show that she had no desire to enter into controversy on the subject. She was content to pursue her own course, and leave others to pursue theirs. Honestly dissenting from those who deny to infants the right of baptism, she yet desired not to break such bonds of good understanding as existed between herself and others, by insisting on points of difference. If her course henceforward be different, the fault lies not at our door. Challenged as we have been, it is impossible to avoid discussion; nor have we any reason at all to dread the



agitation of the question at issue. The right of infants to connexion with their Lord by baptism is one which rests on grounds supported by reason, by antiquity, and, as we think, by Revelation. To them all do we mean to appeal. We may not, perhaps, convince those who are the victims of foregone conclusions, or who have no desire or interest to see things in a different light. But, at all events, we can satisfy those of our own communion, that in admitting infants to baptism we are neither irrational, superstitious, or unsupported by the practice of those who, from the times in which they lived, may fairly be supposed acquainted with the minds of inspired men on the subject.

Our course, in the discussion of the point, shall be this. We shall first examine the grounds on which others dissent from the baptism of infants, and then place before our readers those on which we maintain an opposite opinion. To this we shall add the consideration of some objections urged against our own system.

The first ground on which the Anabaptists rest their case is a negative one. They can find for the baptism of little children no express com-

mand in the Scriptures, and no express instance in them of infants having been baptized. Our reply to this is simple enough. There are many things accepted by us and others which can plead for themselves no similar authority. Many points are matters rather of inference and deduction than of express legislation. The New Testament being not a book of positive injunctions, but of statements, arguments, and history, we cannot expect always to find commands laid down in the same dogmatic manner as the Books of Exodus and Leviticus present. We all, for example, acknowledge the great truth of a Trinity in Unity, and yet in the form of that expression we find the worship of a Triune God nowhere absolutely enjoined; but we find proofs enough of the distinction of Persons, of their separate Divinity and essential Unity, to make that doctrine necessary. We find it nowhere commanded that Christians should abandon the seventh-day Sabbath, and take up the Lord's Day instead; yet we find such hints and habits on that point as appear to us equivalent to a command. We find no express authority for admitting females to the privilege of the Table of the Lord; yet we naturally enough

infer, that as that blessing was intended for Christians, and no reservation made on the score of sex, they are entitled to a participation of the privilege. Yet that is a matter of inference, grounded entirely on the assumption that certain mercies were intended for all, inasmuch as no exception is made. We find the New Testament closing without a special enumeration of its inspired books, or an express command to accept them as inspired; or, in other words, we do not find the Canon of the New Testament endorsed as is that of the Old by our Lord. But we, our opponents as well as ourselves, are content to accept that as undeniable, from the hands of those who had it in their power to determine the question of the authenticity and inspiration of certain documents or treatises. We find, if we refer to our Lord's teaching, that He adopted many things in use in the Jewish Church, for which assuredly there is no express authority in the Old Scriptures; such as Feasts resting on Church authority, and additions to the solemnities of the Passover, not discoverable in the original institution. It is partly on this ground that our Church accepts the right of infants to baptism. "The baptism of young children is in

“anywise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.” That is, we find such baptism in existence, and we retain it as an usage which we dare not overthrow, because, if not expressly ordered, yet “agreeable to Christ’s institution.” If we were disposed to press this point farther, we might fairly challenge things in use in dissenting communities, lying outside of the express injunction of Scripture; nay, some of them, as we think, opposed to that injunction. For example, the rule of the Word of God is, that “a man examine himself before he eat of that bread and drink of that cup:” whereas the rule of those who are strict scrupulists for commandment on all points, is, that a congregational tribunal examine him. That a thing be expressly enjoined, that it be at manifest variance with command, and that it be in opposition to no command, but, on the contrary, agreeable to certain significant facts—these are all different propositions. It is on the last of these that we place the usage of Infant Baptism.

But there is another view to be taken of this point. It is true that in Scripture we trace no express command for the baptizing of infants,


but it may be questioned whether that very omission, under the circumstances, be not an argument in favour of the custom. For, let us remember how the case stands. The command issued by our Lord is quite general, specifying neither age nor sex ; for the expression, "teach all nations," is, rightly translated, "make disciples of all nations." It can be conclusively shown that the Jews were in the habit of baptizing the children of proselytes. That fact any one will find established to a demonstration in the works of Hammond, Selden, Lightfoot, and Goodwyn, and confirmed by the highest of Jewish authorities, Maimonides ; the latter saying, among many other things to the same purpose, "an Israelite that finds a heathen infant and baptizes him for a proselyte, behold he is a proselyte ;" and Dr. Lightfoot affirming, that "the baptizing of infants was a thing as well known in the Church of the Jews, as ever it has been in the Christian Church." * (Hor. Heb., Matt. iii.) And this practice of baptizing infants being in existence, our Lord issues His command, without appending to it any clause exceptional. A fair inference is,

* See Appendix D.

that He meant not to make any exception. Or, to put it in a clearer light, let us suppose that our Lord had been pleased to substitute the ordinance of circumcision for baptism, and issue a general order to circumcise all disciples—the circumcision of children being at that time the rule and habit of the people among whom He was standing—would any one, in the absence of a prohibition directed against them, dream of suddenly changing a custom, and denying to children the initiatory ordinance? It is plainly quite as reasonable, under the circumstances, to infer that the general command included the particular persons, as to infer, because there is no special mention of them, that it was designed to exclude them.

The second objection is grounded on the admitted inability of infant subjects of baptism to enter intelligently into the responsibilities or the advantages of the ordinance, and therefore to derive any benefit from it. I am free to confess that I dislike this way of dealing with the power of God to reach the human soul. Does it follow that an infant cannot be invested with privileges, which, made over formally to it now, may, on the fulfilment of conditions, become absolute

presently? Is spiritual advantage to be always measured by intellectual ability? Does there stand at the door of the soul a guard called Reason or Capacity, who is to forbid the entrance of God's grace to those who cannot give the countersign to his question? Is it in this way that our Lord dealt with "little children?" Rebuked by disciples on what they, no doubt, considered sufficient and reasonable grounds, they yet are taken into the Lord's arms and blessed by His benediction. Doubtless there were those who stood by, and with cold scorn condemned the whole proceeding as irrational, if not superstitious. With such the Lord had no sympathy; nay, not with His own immediate followers, who would have barred the way to His embrace. No right have we, as to me it seems, to decide what souls are in a condition to receive blessing from the Lord. Inapt or unsuited recipients, to our minds, they may be, and yet not such with Him who has access to all souls, and ways of operation, of which we, in our ignorance and hard rationalism, know nothing. A mystery, no doubt, it is, how such unconscious and unintelligent subjects can be reached; but no more a mystery than



that Lazarus the dead man heard Christ's voice, the ruler's dead daughter felt His power, ~~at~~ the lame man felt endued with a new-born vigour when told to "arise and walk." A mystery, no doubt; but no more a mystery than that the world fell from chaotic confusion into arrangement and beauty, and the sea rolled back and the dry land appeared, and light burst forth on wondering creation, at the simple utterance of the words of the Eternal. Things there are in the infant's mind of which we know nothing, dim recognitions and preferences, if not thoughts, which are a wonder and an enigma to us. And that God should be declared inadequate to deal with such souls, because reason has not developed itself, appears to me no better than sheer and irreverent rationalism. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." "If it be a marvellous thing in our eyes, should it, therefore, be so in His?" If it be so, then may we hopelessly mourn over those little ones in whom life is early quenched; for unchanged, untouched by God, they pass into the world of intelligent

devotion. I may be told, that in that very transition, ~~a~~ change may come upon them, "making "them meet" for their new position. Well, if that be so, it is by the power and grace of the Father who has claimed them; and I see not why such a power can be exercised over the soul detached from its little tenement, and not over the soul still sheltered by that tenement. If God can change them so as to make them companions for angels, can He not change them so far as to implant in them the merest germ of that vitality which may, by and by, make them fit for the companionship of earthly saints? I protest entirely against this hard and unholy way of dealing with the omnipotence of God. Christ meant something when He admitted the little ones to His arms, and that which He meant with regard to them, He may surely mean with regard to others.


But if this view be not sufficient to meet the objection, let it be remembered that it was not thought unfitting by the God of the spirits of all flesh to admit children into covenant connexion with Himself, at eight days old, by the ordinance of Circumcision—an ordinance which symbolized the putting off the filth of the flesh

by the circumcision of Christ. What knew those Hebrew infants of that, and was it required of them to know it? Make what we will of it, the little ones under the old economy were taken into covenant with God, invested with the privileges flowing from that covenant, made heirs of its promises, expectants of its distinctions, and yet, intellectually, all unconscious of the honour put upon them. If children were admissible into the earlier covenant notwithstanding mental incapacity, why should they be debarred from the later one, more especially as we find in the New Testament Circumcision and Baptism used as kindred, if not exchangeable, terms? And if, again, we be told, that on account of such incapacity children must be held incompetent to receive impressions, suasions, tendencies, in a merciful direction; we reply, that on all hands they are not held incompetent to receive tendencies in an impure and perilous direction. For, are they not the children of Adam, and (unless we be Pelagians) born into this world ungodly from their mothers' womb? Yea, but it may be said that natural generation accounts for all this: that "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and to that I reply, "That which is born of the Spirit

"is spirit." If Adam can transmit his corruption, cannot the second Adam transmit of His purity? If inherent sin be the heritage of descent, may not that implanted grace be the heritage of relationship with Jesus? If the world's foe breathed disloyalty into man, thereby alienating him from God, may not the world's Friend breathe power to aid in the counteraction of that tendency? I am saying nothing just now on the nature of the grace of baptism, but only meeting the objections that infants ought not to be baptized on account of supposed intellectual incapacity.

We are, besides, told that the administration of baptism to infants is unreasonable, because repentance and faith ought, according to scriptural order, to precede baptism. And when we ask for authority for that, we are referred to the well-known passage,—“Preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned;” and on this is grounded the inference, that inasmuch as baptism follows upon believing, and infants are incapable of belief, the ordinance in their case is unsuitable. Now, as to the truth of this precedence of belief over baptism, as far

as adults are concerned, there appears no reason for disputing it ; and, accordingly, in the Service for the Baptism of those of Riper Years, such pre-requisites are distinctly demanded. But, surely, they who bring forward this passage as opposed to the baptism of infants, do not mean seriously to affirm that it has any intentional reference to infants at all? It is one thing to say, that from adults a personal declaration of repentance and faith is expected, and another to say that infants must be excluded from baptism because they are incapable of producing either. The assertion must be limited to those who are capable of complying with it. If not, let us see to what the interpretation presented will lead. If the passage is not to be limited to adults, then follows the terrible consequence that no infant can be saved ; for belief is demanded from them as a condition of salvation, and that belief they are incompetent to profess. Are the impugners of infant baptism prepared for that conclusion? Nay, we may carry the examination of this point a step further, and remind them that, on their own showing, there is no certainty of the salvation of the child of a Baptist who, at years of discretion, may die unbaptized.



The assertion is, that the baptized believer shall be saved ; and, believer or not, such an one is not baptized. No doubt the second clause is more limited, for it shuts out only the unbelieving from salvation ; but our business is with the first clause ; and that, by insisting on baptism, leaves the salvation of an unbaptized youth in a state of painful uncertainty, for he has not complied with the two conditions laid down as linked to the promise of salvation. Let our opponents look to that ; for surely it is a monstrous inconsistency to admit a child to be a believer, and yet to be unfit to be a registered member of the community of the faithful ! The truth is, that the passage has nothing to do with any but those who are capable of belief ; and, therefore, cannot apply to the case of infants at all. It is open to us to use it against the non-baptized, but it is not open to others to use it as fatal to the baptism of infants.

The last ground on which the opponents of infant baptism rest their case is found in an appeal to the words, if not to the usages of Antiquity. It is maintained, that an examination of the writings of the Christian Fathers will show that the practice, if existing at all, was not so universal

as to entitle it to a place among the accepted ordinances of the Church. Now, before entering upon a review of the passages pointed to by Baptists as favourable to their own ease, let us draw a necessary distinction. It is one thing to find that an individual writer has doubts in his mind as to the propriety of early baptism, and another thing to accept that writer as representing the voice of antiquity. We are not concerned with men's *opinions* on the subject, for the question is not what a writer or two thought, but, what were the confessed *customs* of the Church in their days? The point is not one of sentiment, it is one of history. If we find that an author admits that infant baptism was everywhere practised, but that he thought it ought to be delayed to a more mature age, we can accept his individual opinion for what it is worth; but as an historian of facts, we limit him to his admissions. It is surely, for example, no conclusive argument against the use of liturgies in churches that an author, while confessing that they were everywhere used, expressed his own notion that unprepared prayers were better. That might be his conscientious persuasion, but it does not affect the point that liturgies were everywhere used. Nay,

if a score of writers confessed that the Divinity of our Lord was an accepted article of the Church Catholic, but that they themselves had tendencies towards Arianism, that would not displace that dogma from the place it occupied in the Church's recognition. And it surely must be regarded as somewhat indicative of the weakness of their cause when objectors to the baptism of infants, after loud and pretentious appeals to the testimony of antiquity, are able to produce, out of the sixty or seventy volumes which represent the writings of the Fathers, only two or three passages in support of their views, and that even those passages absolutely fail to support them. The question being an historical one, to be proved or disproved by the voice of the ancients, we should reasonably have expected a formidable Consensus of declaration, affirming either that infant baptism was only partially admitted, or not existent at all, or else an innovation on the purity of the Church. I think it will be found, on examination, that not one of these three propositions can be maintained. Let us now turn to their authorities.

The first is of most respectable antiquity (for Tertullian wrote about ninety years after the

death of the apostles), but of questionable theological weight; for a Montanist can hardly be held to be a man of sound and solid judgment. However, let us hear his testimony. In the eighteenth chapter of his book, "De Baptismo," he writes,—
"Therefore, according to every one's condition and disposition, and also his age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children (*parvulos*). For what need is there that sponsors should incur danger, because they either fail of their promises?" &c. Now we may surely ask, How can this benefit the case of the Baptists? It is an individual opinion of Tertullian, that it would be profitable to delay the baptism of little children till more mature years. By all means let him hold his opinion, as he held others for which he has obtained a place among the heretics of the second century. But let us not mistake that individual opinion for either the voice of the Church or an historic declaration that infant baptism was not the Church's practice. So far from it, that his words distinctly show that it was the usage of his time. Disposed as he plainly was to quarrel with that usage, we should have expected him to place himself on vantage

ground, by asserting, if it had been so, that the usage was an innovation on the system of earlier days. But not a syllable insinuating such an idea drops from his pen. He admits infant baptism to be the rule, and advances his own crude opinion as the exception. But that exception proves the rule. Assuredly, if adult baptism was the practice of the Churches, Tertullian would have held his peace, for his views and universal practice would have been strictly in unison. But the recommendation of delay clearly proves that delay was not the usage.

Another passage, supposed, but with equally slender reason, to be favourable to the cause of anti-pædobaptism, is found in the writings of Justin Martyr, A.D. 140. In it he gives the earliest description that we have of the mode of administering baptism in early times:—"Then
"we bring them to some place where there
"is water, and they are regenerated by the
"same way of regeneration by which we were
"regenerated; for they are washed in water in
"the Name of God the Father and Lord of all
"things, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and
"of the Holy Ghost." (Apolog. i.) I suppose

(for it is anything but self-apparent) that the force of this evidence lies in the circumstance that the persons of whom Justin speaks were baptized in the same way in which he himself, an adult convert, was baptized. But it has two defects vitally affecting the conclusion. The first is, that it is assumed that he is speaking of the *persons* baptized, whereas he is simply speaking of the manner in which they were baptized; and secondly, that admitting that he is speaking of adult baptism, we cannot by any possibility see how that affects the question of infant baptism. No one denied, or could deny, that adults were and are baptized. But would it be a fair inference that, because a Missionary wrote as to how he had baptized a number of adult converts, therefore he baptized no infants? If that be a legitimate mode of arguing, our opponents may take up any number of our Missionary registers, and reading that a few converts to Christianity, "old men and young men" "and maidens," were on a certain day admitted to baptism, triumphantly affirm that infant baptism had no existence at all in that missionary sphere. Because a writer describes one thing, therefore (admirable logic!) another thing could not be. Yet


this is the reasoning of Baptists. Cold and meagre must be the recognition that antiquity yields to their demands, when they are compelled thus to torture its passages. One thing only we add on this point. As we shall have occasion presently to dwell on the subject of Regeneration, we pray those who differ from us to recollect, that in admitting Justin in this passage to be speaking of baptism, they admit that the word "regeneration" is used by him as simply equivalent to baptism.

There is another passage sometimes, but, I must admit, cautiously quoted, from the works of Gregory Nazianzen, about the year 360. "What say you to those that are as yet infants, and are not in a capacity to be sensible either of the grace or the loss of it? Shall we baptize them, then? Yes, by all means, if any danger makes it requisite." The use made of this passage is this, that Gregory appears to recommend infant baptism only when a necessity calls for it, and, therefore, that it must be regarded as exceptional. But, in the first place, does this represent either the principles or practice of Anabaptists? Are they prepared, in case of necessity, to baptize infants? On the contrary, with them there is no amount of neces-

sity that justifies it. But, in the second place, if they who rely on this passage only look to a sentence some lines farther down, they will discover that Gregory Nazianzen's comparison is not between infants and those of mature age, but between infants and children of three years old. Here are his words :—" As you ask, I give my opinion, that " they should stay three years or thereabouts, when " they are capable to hear and answer some of the " holy words . . . For though they are not liable " to give account of their life before their reason " be come to maturity . . . yet, by reason of those " sudden and unexpected assaults of dangers that " are by no endeavours to be prevented, it is by " all means advisable that they be secured by the " laver." (*Orat. de Bapt.*) I think it is abundantly clear that this authority cannot be quoted on the side of the opponents of the baptism of infants. If it be, they must be prepared, first, to baptize mere infants in cases of necessity; and secondly, in no case to delay baptism beyond the age of three years. How this will aid their cause, I confess myself unable to comprehend.

Besides these I do not know of any passage of patristic antiquity on which they pretend to rely.


It will be seen, on the slightest reflection on the observations made, that that appeal leaves them utterly unaided. It is made, not to the many authors who flourished in the first four centuries, but to three (and what are they among so many?), and those three positively on the other side of the question. In the next chapter we do not mean to be so parsimonious in our quotations. We have examined the one side of the position; we shall advance to the defence of the other.




CHAPTER IV.

THE RIGHT OF INFANTS TO BAPTISM.

IN taking up the case of Infant Baptism, it is necessary to introduce our remarks by a single word of caution. There is a stratagem sometimes practised in this controversy, consisting of the exhibition of passages bearing on the baptism of adults, and then claiming them as covering the whole subject. It is obvious at a glance, that a thousand adduced instances of adult baptism cannot disprove the concomitant fact of infant baptism. The affirmation of one fact may be thoroughly consistent with the affirmation of another; and the induction of an instance does not shut out the existence of other instances. Both may at the same time be true. We deny not the thousand instances which may be presented; all we contend for is, that there are other instances besides them.



Now, in affirming the scripturality of the Baptism of Infants, and their right to be thus admitted into the Christian covenant, we refer, in the first place, to the admitted analogy between Circumcision and Baptism. We say, "the admitted analogy," for impossible it is to study the Apostolic Epistles and deny it. For example, we find St. Paul thus writing to the Church at Colosse,—“Ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God.” (Col. ii. 10, 12.) Here we find the two terms so interchanged, that Baptism, the Christian Circumcision, is made analogous to the Jewish. It seems improbable that the Apostle should have thus written, if he were not prepared to ascribe to the one ordinance the privileges conveyed by the other. But, confessedly, Circumcision was the rite whereby children as well as adults were admitted into covenant with God, whereby the privileges of that covenant



were sealed and made over to them, and in virtue of which they were made members of the commonwealth of Israel. If for all this, children were eligible, why, for corresponding privileges under the Gospel, should not children be eligible? If it be not so, the later dispensation, so far from being an improvement on the earlier, clearly falls short of it. And any Jew passing into Christianity would feel that he had cut off his children from a position and advantages to which, under Moses, they had been entitled. Surely this is neither reasonable nor consistent with the relations of the two economies.

And this argument we may put in a clearer light, by comparing the covenant made with Abraham with the use made of it by St. Peter in the Acts of the Apostles. That covenant is the same in substance with ours, for both rested on the promised seed, both conveyed acceptance with God, both carried the expectation forward to better things to come. Else the Apostle had not used the words,—“Ye are the children of the “prophets, and of the covenant which God made “with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in “thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be

“blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up
“His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turn-
“ing away every one of you from his iniquities.”
(Acts, iii. 25, 26.) If the covenant and the im-
port of it be the same, the subjects entitled to
admission are the same also. But, undeniably,
children, in virtue of their descent from believing
parents, were entitled to admission into the one,
and, therefore, on the same ground, to admission
to the other. And the only thing we can imagine
as capable for a moment of disturbing this con-
clusion, would be the repeal in Scripture of the
blessings offered to the children of the covenant.
But of no such repeal have we the slightest trace
in Scripture, and, therefore, without a note of re-
servation, do the Apostles treat the two rites as
parallel, and, as it seems to me, establish the
right of children of believing parents to baptism.
It was probably the force of such considerations
that drew from St. Paul that remarkable declara-
tion,—“The unbelieving husband is sanctified by
“the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified
“by the husband: else were your children un-
“clean; but now are they holy.” “Holy?” in
what sense? The opponents of the right of in-

phants to baptism will tell us that they are legitimate. Legitimate in consequence of one of two Gentiles, duly married, having been converted to Christianity!—an interpretation surely too monstrous to be entertained. No; there are but two senses in which the child of a believing parent can be holy, either absolutely or relatively; one through sanctification, the other through relationship. The former in the case of an infant, and merely on account of descent, is impossible. The latter remains the only other possible interpretation. If, therefore, Circumcision corresponds to Baptism, if both admit to distinctive privileges, and if the child of a Jew be entitled to the one, then by every parity of circumstance and every conclusion of reason, the child of a Christian is entitled to the other.*

But let us advance another step, and see in what position children are placed by our Lord and His Apostles. Very significant is our Master's command,—“Suffer the little children to come “unto Me, and forbid them not.” No doubt they who were around took what many would call the reasonable view of the application of the mothers or friends of these little ones. For were they

* See Appendix E.

not unconscious, and, to their minds, unsusceptible of spiritual impressions? Apparently our Lord thought otherwise, and bore down hard rationalism by the tenderness of His injunction. I see not how that command is to be obeyed, except through this ordinance. Beyond question, children may be brought to Christ by a mother's prayers or a father's devout dedication, and so, figuratively, laid in His arms. Beyond question, children, when their faculties begin to open, may be told the story of a Saviour's love, and thus be drawn to Him who showed such graciousness to infants. But it is not of children in that condition that the passage speaks; it is of infants who could lie in His embrace. And certain it is, that the Church in all ages has regarded this act of His as pointing to that mode of access to Him which afterwards He ordained.* We say not that this act proves that infants should be baptized; but this we do say, that if it be found historically to be a fact that from the first they were baptized, men looking back for an authority for it would be most likely to find it in this action of our Saviour.

* See Appendix F.

But the hint which we obtain here we shall find largely confirmed by a consultation of the Apostolic Epistles. There we find whole Christian communities addressed—and that without discrimination made or distinction drawn—as “Saints,” “Faithful,” “Brethren,” “Members of Christ;” and among those communities we find children. For are they not told to “obey their parents in the Lord,” to “obey their parents in all things?” How came these—unbaptized, unaccepted, outside the covenant, unsealed as Christ’s—to be included in such titles and to have a place given them in such a fellowship? They had done nothing, and nothing had been done to them, to entitle them to such a recognition. Of their personal goodness and holiness the Apostle probably knew nothing, nor have we reason to think that in those respects they stood distinguished from other children. Yet for some reason they are “Saints,” “Faithful,” and “Members of the Lord.” We shall be told that the position in which their parents stood of itself covered and included them. But that was not the principle allowed in that church and nation of which St. Paul had been a member.

There the rule was, not that children were regarded as within the borders of the covenant because their parents were, but that, if such children were not circumcised, they should be "cut off from the people." All that their parents gave them was a legitimate right of admission into state and blessings. The position flowed from the admission itself; and it is difficult to see with what consistency or propriety the Apostle could have addressed those children in a letter, whose superscription was, "To saints and faithful," unless in the way in which their parents obtained those titles they obtained them likewise.

But after all, this question is more an historical than a theological one. It is well to know on what ground children are entitled to this privilege; but the point for us to settle is, rather, Whether from the first they enjoyed it? And to determine that, we must call in the testimony of antiquity. Let it be quite understood, that we do not appeal to the early writers called the Fathers for the purpose of deriving from them abstract doctrinal opinions, or of learning from them whether they considered the baptism of infants to be right or wrong. However interesting it might be

to know their mind in this matter, or to observe the grounds on which they formed their conclusions, we could not place declarations to that effect higher than as the views of learned and thoughtful men. It is not as theologians but as historians, that we consult them ; and if we can find passages in their writings showing that Infant Baptism existed in their times ; and if such passages meet us, not controversially, as though they were advocating a new or doubtful thing ; and if, besides, there are such a multitude and concurrence of such passages as prove the wide-spread acceptance of the institution—then are we furnished with an argument which, pursued to its deduction, is well-nigh irresistible. And this is just the character of the proof we are about to offer. Drawn from early times it must be, else it were open to the objection that it expressed but the declensions of corrupt ages ; and drawn from quarters far-distant from each other it must be, else it might be considered as an attempt to make a section of the Church stand for the whole. Keeping our eye on these requisites, we shall turn to antiquity for its testimony as to the existence of Infant Baptism in the early ages of Christianity.

Justin Martyr wrote about the year 140, or less than half a century after Apostolic times, and when, at least, the traditions of the Apostles must have been fresh and intelligible. In his First Apology, addressed to Antoninus, he gives this description of Baptism:—"We bring them to a place where water is, and they are regenerated by the same way of regeneration by which we were regenerated, for they are washed in water in the name of God, &c. For Christ says, 'Ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless ye be regenerated,'" &c. This passage is not adduced to prove anything respecting Infant Baptism, but for the purpose of showing that in those days Regeneration (or the introduction into a new state and relation) was another word for Baptism. In another passage Justin calls Baptism "spiritual circumcision."

Irenæus, the Bishop of Lyons, wrote about the year 167, in these words:—"Christ came to save all persons by Himself; all, I mean, who by Him are regenerated unto God—infants and little ones, and children and youths and elders." (Adv. Hæres.) Here we have the word Regeneration employed as Justin employs it. If

not, what else did it mean? Regeneration in the sense of an absolute and radical change in nature, tastes, powers? That will hardly be asserted or predicated of infants: and if we take it, as we must take it in Justin's sense, then Infant Baptism was an institution in the days of Irenæus.

Clement of Alexandria wrote thus about the year 192. His subject is that of modesty in dress and simplicity in ornaments. "Let your seal be a dove, or a fish, or a ship under sail, &c. And if any one be by trade a fisherman, he will do well to think of an Apostle, and the children taken out of the water." And, "If the sign of a fisherman be engraven in a seal-ring, let him bear in mind Peter, whom Christ made a fisher of men; and of children, who, baptized from a laver of water, were taken out, as out of a fish-pond." (*Pædag.* c. iii.) I apprehend that no man of candour will deny that in those days the baptism of infants was a practice of the Church.

Tertullian wrote about 200. His testimony I have produced in the last chapter, when examining the case of our opponents. I re-quote it, as positively on our side of the question. "According to

“ every one’s position and disposition, and also their
“ age, *the delaying of baptism* is more profitable,
“ especially in the case of little children. For
“ what need is there that sponsors should suffer
“ danger, because they may either fail of their
“ promises by death, or be mistaken in a child’s evil
“ temper ?” For a moment we cannot question,
that in the days of Tertullian the baptism of infants was an ordinance and usage of the Church. No doubt, delay is counselled as a matter of expediency, but that proves that delay was not the rule. The opinion is his own ; his testimony is the proof that Infant Baptism was the custom.

Cyprian was Bishop of Carthage, and wrote in the year 250. The very question which produced the letter from which the quotation is taken, and led to the convening of the Council of Carthage at which sixty-six Bishops met in consultation, of itself establishes our point. For the question put before him by Boniface, a contemporary bishop, was not, Whether Infant Baptism was allowable—that is never disputed or doubted—but, Whether, in case of necessity, a child might not be baptized sooner than the eighth day of its life ? His decision, and that of

the Council, is as follows:—"As to the case of
" Infants, whereas you judge that they must not
" be baptized within two or three days after they
" are born, and that the law of circumcision is
" to be observed, so that none shall be baptized
" and sanctified before the eighth day after birth,
" we were all, in assembly, of the opposite opi-
" nion. . . . The spiritual circumcision ought
" not to be restricted by the circumcision that is
" according to the flesh, but all to be admitted
" to the grace of Christ." (Ep. ad Bonif.)

Gregory Nazianzen wrote about the year 360;
and as his authority is sometimes—not always, and
that for cogent reasons—quoted by the opponents
of Infant Baptism, we shall dwell especially on
his testimony. Urging the expediency to use
all diligence that "we do not miss the com-
" mon grace," he writes,—“Some one may say,
" Suppose this to hold in the case of those that
" can desire baptism, what say you to those that
" are yet infants, and not in a capacity to be
" sensible either of the grace or the loss of it;
" shall we baptize them, too? Yes, by all means,
" if any danger makes it requisite. . . .
" As for others, I give my opinion that they

“should stay three years or thereabouts, when they are capable to hear and answer some of the holy words,” &c. (De Bapt.) I have already commented on this passage, adduced as it is by some as favourable to adult baptism only, or rather, as unfavourable to that of infants. Why it should have been claimed for that purpose exceeds my comprehension. Because a man allows baptism to infants in case of necessity, therefore he is opposed to infant baptism! Because he recommends delay in baptism till three years, therefore he is an advocate for the baptism of adults only! One thing the passage distinctly proves, that the baptism of *children* was allowed by this Father, and, if necessary, that of infants also. But in no case does he sanction the doctrine, that baptism of infants and children there should be none. Clearly, therefore, he is a witness on our side, and as clearly an opponent of Baptists.

Basil of Cappadocia wrote about the year 363. In his “Oratio ad Baptismum” he observes, —“A Jew does not delay circumcision because of the threatening that every soul that is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people.

“And dost thou put off the circumcision made
 “without hands in the putting off of the flesh,
 “which is performed in baptism, when thou
 “hearest our Lord himself say, ‘Except one be
 “‘born of water and of the Spirit he shall not
 “‘enter the kingdom of God?’” The analogy
 here is obvious, and the argument built on it trans-
 parent. The Jewish child was circumcised at eight
 days, the Christian child should not be denied its
 baptism longer. It is taken for granted that the
 one ordinance occupies the place of the other.
 The objects being equal, the ages ought to be
 the same; in other words, Infant Baptism is
 recognized as being then the necessary usage of
 the Church.


Chrysostom, the Bishop of Constantinople,
 wrote thus about the year 380:—“Some think
 “that the heavenly grace consists only in for-
 “givenness of sins; but I have reckoned up ten
 “advantages of it. For this cause we baptize
 “infants also, though they are not defiled with
 “(actual) sin, that there may be superadded
 “to them saintship, righteousness, adoption, in-
 “heritance, a brotherhood with Christ, and being
 “made members of Him.” (Hom. ad Baptism.)

If in early times men conceived that blessings such as these were associated with baptism, they would have felt it fraud and cruelty to have denied it to their children. But the merciful consideration of the early Church seems to fall with but slight force on modern Christians.


Lastly, we turn to the writings of Augustin, the celebrated Bishop of Hippo, the light and glory of the African Church. In his discourse on baptism, directed against the Donatists, and treating of the question of the possibility of salvation without baptism (as in the case of the penitent malefactor), and of the expediency or otherwise of delaying baptism, he says,—“Which the whole
“body of the Church holds as delivered to them
“in the case of little infants baptized, who certainly cannot yet believe with the heart to
“righteousness, or confess with the mouth to
“salvation as the thief could; nay, by their
“crying and noise while the sacrament is administering they disturb the holy mysteries;
“and yet no Christian man will say they are baptized to no purpose. If any man asks for divine
“authority in this matter, though that which the
“whole Church practises, and which has not been

“instituted by councils but was ever in use, is
 “very reasonably believed to be no other than
 “a thing delivered by authority of the Apostles,
 “yet we may besides take a true estimate, how
 “much the Sacrament of Baptism does avail in-
 “fants by the circumcision which God’s former
 “people received.” This testimony, from the
 great learning of the writer and the strength of
 its language, is one of the very highest import-
 ance. It not only establishes that, when
 Augustine wrote, no man denied the baptism of
 infants to be the rule and practice of the Church,
 but takes up the very ground on which the
 Church of England in her Articles has placed the
 question ;—the universality of the practice “ever
 “in use,”—leading almost irresistibly to the con-
 clusion that it was agreeable to the institution of
 Christ Himself.

At this point, which touches the end of the
 fourth century, we may close our quotations from
 antiquity ; not because they are half exhausted,
 but because it would be utterly useless to carry
 them further. When such authors as Irenæus,
 Clement, Tertullian, Cyprian, Gregory, Basil,
 Chrysostom, and Augustin, concur with one voice



to affirm Infant Baptism to have been the usage of their times, and trace it, not to conciliary edicts but to at least Apostolic authority, it were a matter of supererogation to pursue the point historically further. But it may be well to show the full strength of the argument we build on these testimonies, by dwelling on one circumstance which marks their utterance. They come not from men of one age, but of many ages; not from men living in one section or country of Christendom, but in parts widely separated from each other. Had it been otherwise, the argument would have been open to the objection that we must not assume the voice of a corrupt age to be that of antiquity, or the writings of men acting in concert and sympathising with each other for the expression of the whole Church. In such an objection, if the case justified it, there would be no doubt considerable weight, for communities are liable to act in unison, and to be affected by that intercommunication which proximity facilitates. But that is not our case. The voices which reach us come from Rome, Lyons, Alexandria, Carthage, Cappadocia, Seleucia, Constantinople, and Hippo. Europe, Asia, and



Africa send out their testimonies, and their testimonies are found to be harmonious. We are entitled to ask, Is it within the range of the most extravagant possibility that this wide-spread concurrence of judgment could have been at all obtained, if Infant Baptism had not been from the beginning sanctioned and ordained by some authority to which all felt themselves compelled to defer? For it must be borne in recollection that those ages were times of extreme jealousy as to the introduction of new opinions or usages—times of rigid examination and deliberate settlement of doctrines—times of great controversial criticism—times of peculiar independence of thought. Nothing that wore the aspect of an unsupported dogma or a questionable rite was permitted to pass unchallenged into acceptance. Heresies arose, only to be suspected, sifted, opposed, and rejected. Questions arose upon points trivial, such as the lawfulness of baptizing on the third day instead of the eighth, or the mixing of water with wine at the Eucharist, giving occasion to grave consultations and warm disputes. Speculations appeared, sometimes recommended by attractive arguments and sustained by high au-

thority, and found their fate in indignant repudiation. Is it possible that at such a time, so scrupulous, so suspicious, and so controversial, an enormous innovation of this description could have been palmed upon the Church? Who would be likely to attempt it, and how could it be successfully carried out? The supposed conspirators were men of the highest eminence and of the purest reputation, occupying positions so widely apart from each other as to make the intercommunication necessary to success a matter of difficulty, if not of impossibility. Besides, what motive can be conceived of sufficient force to overshadow all honest principle, all respect for ancient precedents, all veneration for Divine and Apostolic institutions? There was neither personal advantage to be gained, nor private ambition to be gratified, nor political opponents to be conciliated by it. No human influence could have commanded this universal and unquestioned adoption of the practice, or forced the conviction that it was legitimate and in accordance with the will of God. "Unquestioned," we say, for it is of the utmost importance to note, that while the supposed innovation was taking

place, not one voice was raised challenging it as an encroachment, or denouncing it as a superstition. Nay, more; we are able to show that this significant silence was not the result of ignorance or inattention, for we have in three authors of the early ages catalogues of the several sects representing the various opinions which from time to time sprang up and agitated the Church, and among them we find neither notice nor mention of Anti-pædobaptists. A sufficiently clear proof, this, that in those days such opinions were unknown. Of this mystery they have the choice only of one or the other of two solutions: either that such a sect did not exist, or that, if it did, it was considered too contemptible for notice.

We may carry our argument one step further. If antiquity knows nothing of these opinions except in the case of one or two men of unstable minds, who, at the most, only advocated delay in the baptism of infants, but never asserted its unlawfulness, we shall discover that they met with no better favour at the hands of the great authorities of later ages. It has been shown that the writers of the first four centuries give no support to these views; and we may venture to add, that if we


carry our inquiries down to the days of the Reformation, we shall not find those times reversing the verdict of antiquity. In fact, if it were otherwise, that would hardly improve the case against which we contend; for it would only prove that time produces "departures from the faith." We do not at all mean to say that here and there, along the line of church history, men and sects may not be met with, as Bruno and Berengarius or some of the Lollards, who held Infant Baptism to be wrong. But the voice of individuals and that of the Church are different things. And if we wish to know what view the Churches of the Reformation took, we have but to consult their Confessions of Faith, and, unless we greatly mistake, we shall trace in them the same significant harmony on this point which we discovered in the writings of the early ages. Subjoined to this work will be found quotations from the Confessions of Switzerland, Bohemia, France, Belgium, Augsburg, Saxony, Wirtemberg, and Sueveland, all avowing the same views, all in harmony with antiquity, and all professing none with the opponents of Infant Baptism.* Is

* See Appendix G.

it possible—at least, is it likely—that all antiquity and all the theology of the Reformation is wrong, and this exceptional school alone right? Are the careful thoughts and learned investigations of the great apologists and doctors of the early Church to go for nothing? Are the deliberate judgments of such men as Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Bucer, and Cranmer, to go for nothing? Are erudition, and reflection, and conscientious determination to adhere to truth at all hazards, to go for nothing? We can readily admit that great names do not necessarily make wrong things right; and that in dark and corrupt times the Church fell into grievous errors—not the less grievous because endorsed by the decrees of councils and the treatises of schoolmen. But that admission does not represent these views; for, beyond question, they were held in those times when the Church was in the freshness of her young purity, and re-affirmed in times when, by universal admission, she emerged from the darkness of superstition into the sunshine of scriptural truth. For those later days were days of rejection of error, and of predisposition to cast aside everything that Rome held, simply because Rome

did hold it. The cry was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But the cause of truth was stronger than prejudice. The old test, "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus,*" could not be put aside at the bidding of mere suspicion. And men of learning and candour, sitting in consultation over the words of Scripture and the decisions of antiquity, found no difficulty in bringing in their verdict that infants were, if born of Christian parents, within the provisions of the covenant, and entitled to introduction to its blessings in the way of Christ's appointment.


To these considerations one or two thoughts may be added, more of the nature of deduction from, than of addition to, the arguments stated. This may fairly be claimed for the Church of England, that she attaches no superstitious value to the ordinance of Baptism. Her ministers can join in the anathema, however misplaced it be,—“If any man says that baptism saves, out upon him,” if the meaning of that expression be, that the administration of the rite of Baptism ensures a man's salvation; but if it means that it does nothing whatever for a man—that it



is "a bare and naked sign," conferring on him a Christian name, and making the Temple of God a mere registration office—in that sense we cannot adopt the malediction. For the Word of God says,—“The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us.” What that says we hold, and no more than what it says. But if men cannot comprehend the difference between an act and an effect—between privileges provided and privileges bestowed—between ecclesiastical standing and spiritual condition—between the beginning of Christian life and that state in which “things belonging to the flesh die” in a man, and “things belonging to the Spirit live and grow” in him, we are not answerable for that. The remedy is not for us to depart from views which have been sanctioned by the adoption of the wisest and holiest, the ripest scholars and the profoundest thinkers, but for others to profit by their scholarship. We learn before we speak; others speak before they learn.

It has been asked, “What can be the influence “of such teaching (which?) on our country?” Well, we affirm not the universal holiness of the English Church, any more than we affirm that of

any other community in the land, or that on a field so large there are not tares among the wheat. But this we do affirm, that the past history and present state of the Church of England are sufficient to answer the insinuation. Holier men—men of more devotedness and zeal, of greater earnestness in Christ's service or greater love for the souls He came to redeem, the world never saw, than those who have grown up under the culture, and lived and died in the communion, of our Church. The very men of whose names and memory Dissenters from our Church are so proud, the Nonconformists of the seventeenth century, were brought up in the bosom of that Church. The men who in Reformation days went to the stake rather than disown truth, were members of the Church of England. The bright constellations of scholarship, resplendent with the names of Jewell and Taylor, Stillingfleet and Hooker, Lowth and Lightfoot, Ussher and Leighton, are made up of stars of the Church of England. And all these men held "that sacraments were ordained signs, and also means of spiritual grace," and that doctrine neither destroyed godliness in them nor in those who sat at their feet and learned



of them. Moses said, "Would that all the Lord's "people were prophets!" and we say, "Would that "all who name the name of Christ would depart "from iniquity!" Yet, for all that, for deeds of self-denial, for holiness, for uprightness, for the doing of "things that are honest and of good "report," for zeal in sending the Gospel of Christ to distant lands and extending it at home, for domestic virtues, for social rectitude, and for unpretentious personal religion, we shall fearlessly claim a comparison of the sons and daughters of the English Church with those of any community on earth.

And that care which we have for the welfare of all men we shall carry down to our children. To others, if they must have it so, we shall leave their repudiation of Christ's command, their uncovenanted state, their anomalous and equivocal position. For us, we shall bless our Master, that he has invited the little ones to Himself, and at the font (which we shall still recognize by that name) we shall humbly and faithfully ask Him to do for ours that which He did to those of days past. If they live, we shall help them in their Christian career by reminding them of their dedication, of

the promises made in their name, of the seal of the covenant stamped on their brow. And if they die, it will not deepen our sorrow as we lay them in their narrow cradles and bid them for a while farewell, to remember that in the way of His own appointment we have "brought them to "Jesus," laid them in His arms, and asked Him to bless them.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPONSORIAL INSTITUTION.

THE last chapter was devoted to the consideration of the question, What are the rights of little children with regard to Baptism? And the point we now have to discuss is this, The nature and propriety of that institution which is, in our Services, connected with Baptism—the institution of Sponsors. Of course, every one at all acquainted with the general subject is aware, that sponsors are held in no favour by the opponents of the rights of infants. In fact, with the denial of the one comes the necessary repudiation of the other. The office of sponsors being to respond or engage for those who cannot covenant for themselves, it is no longer needed when such persons are shut out altogether from the privileges of Baptism; and, therefore, on the institution and the act of vicarious response has

been, at all times, poured out the most scalding vials of Anabaptist vituperation. They are alike "iniquitous," "absurd," "blasphemous," and "atrocious." The utterance of vows which the stipulators cannot be sure will ever be carried into effect is "a sight for the mockery of devils." And "coming to the font with faces hardened to "the utterance of false promises" is the description of the consciences of sponsors.

It ought, as we think, to have moderated, if not the feelings of dislike to this institution, at least the form in which those feelings are expressed, to have recollected that it has enjoyed the favourable regard of the best and most learned of all times. That which the great authorities of the early ages accepted, and the greatest lights of the English and Continental Churches approved, is surely entitled to, at least, some respect. Cyprian and Augustine, Luther and Calvin, Cranmer and Hooper, Stillingfleet and Jewell, were not divines likely to smile on an institution deserving of such condemnation. Men they were who acted honestly, and read largely, and thought deeply; and at length gave in their verdict in its favour. The minds of modern times may be

more acute, and their erudition more profound, than what those great men could pretend to ; at all events, the simple fact that the Taylors and Hookers of England, and the Bucers and Melancthons of Germany, adopted sponsorship into their discipline and defended it in their writings, ought to have suggested indulgence to weakness at the hands of its gifted opponents.

We have stated that all the Churches of the Reformation looked with favour on the intervention of sponsors in the administration of baptism to infants. It matters not for our subject what especial titles are bestowed on those who undertake "this charitable office." They may be styled sureties, godfathers, engaging-parents, or sponsors, but virtually those words express the same thing. These varieties of terms but represent the shades of the difference of the relation into which sponsors passed ;—as sureties, they stand pledged to the Church ; as godfathers, they represent that the child has passed into a condition different from that which its natural birth conferred on it ; as engaging-parents, they are more to the child than natural relations ; as sponsors, they reply to the terms demanded. All this variety of title does

not in the least affect the fact of the institution itself. It rather helps to give us a broader and more complete view of that institution, as placing it in the several aspects it can assume, and suggesting the grounds on which the Church recognises it at all. We do not in the least mean to say, that the persons undertaking these engagements, and uttering these responses, are the same in all the Churches. In the Church of England, others than parents are required ; in the Church of Scotland, parents are considered the proper persons to undertake the responsibility. But, at the same time, even those Churches which differ from us on this secondary point do not so far differ as to reject, in all cases, persons other than parents. In the course of our observations it will be shown that even the Scotch Presbyterians and the English Puritans were prepared, under certain circumstances, to allow strangers to assume the sponsorial office and relation. A proof this, that the difference was regarded by them not so much as a matter essential, as a matter expedient : and to that length we are fully prepared to accept their difference of usage. We may think our own a "more excellent way," and to have ad-

vantages not possessed by the other; but we quarrel not in any degree with it. It is quite enough for us that our brethren of other Churches admit that certain contingencies justify them in going off their own ground and occupying ours; and, even without that concession, we would have no controversy with them on the point. Sufficient it is, that they see eye to eye with us in requiring sponsorship for children at baptism. As to the persons in whom that office is lodged, we can well afford to differ without any mutual concession. We may be able, perhaps, to show that their instances of exception may be fairly extended, and even so far as to reach the ground on which we stand. But were it otherwise, it is enough for us that they are one with us in the recognition of the institution itself.

On this point, besides, we are agreed, that the institution of sponsors, so far from being a novelty and an encroachment on the simplicity of primitive Christianity, can plead in its favour the support of a very high antiquity—an antiquity which carries us up to the very borders, if not within the confines, of times apostolical. To show the early and wide acceptance of the institution, I

shall quote from two authors; one of the second century, the other of the fourth. In the year 192, Tertullian used words which have been cited elsewhere in support of the claims of infants to baptism, and which are repeated here as establishing the fact of the existence of sponsors in his days. "According to every one's position the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children. . . . For what need is there that sponsors should incur danger, because they may either fail of their promises by death, or be mistaken in a child of wicked dispositions?" (De Bapt. c. 18.) On this quotation I make but these remarks—that in Tertullian's days Infant Baptism was the usage of the Church, and the institution of sponsors part of the discipline of the Church. It will be observed, that while these facts are adverted to by this writer in that casual, incidental way in which a man would speak of a thing everywhere accepted and on which no doubt existed, there is no question that Tertullian believed that it would be better to defer to the age of childhood the baptism of infants. But that was but the separate opinion of an individual, which must go

for what it is worth ; and that his case is not that of the Baptists is obvious from this, that their objection lies as much against the baptism of children as that of "little children." However, this much is clear, that in the year 192—not above ninety years from the death of St. John—sponsorship was the usage of the Church.

We shall gain additional light on the point by referring to the views of Augustine about the year 388. A letter was addressed to him by a brother-bishop, seeking for his opinion on some points which disturbed him ; one being, whether it were proper that other than parents should undertake the office of presenting children for baptism ; and another, whether children, carried by superstitious friends to heathen shrines in hopes of obtaining charms supposed to expel disease, thereby incurred spiritual injury. The answer of Augustine is as follows :—"I would not have "you mistake so as to think that the bond of "guilt derived from Adam may not be broken, "unless the children be offered for receiving "the grace of Christ by their own parents, "For so you speak in your letter, 'that as the "'parents were authors of the punishment, so

“ ‘they may also by the faith of their parents be
 “ ‘justified;’ whereas you see that a great many
 “ are offered, not by their parents, but by any
 “ other person. As the infant slaves are sometimes
 “ offered by their masters; and sometimes, when
 “ the parents are dead, the infants are baptized,
 “ being offered by any that can afford to show this
 “ compassion on them. And sometimes infants,
 “ whom their parents have cruelly exposed to be
 “ brought up by those that light on them, are
 “ now and then taken up by the holy virgins, and
 “ offered to baptism by those who have no child-
 “ ren of their own, nor design to have any. And
 “ in all this there is nothing else done than what
 “ is written in the Gospel, when our Lord asked,
 “ Who was neighbour to him that was wounded
 “ by thieves, and left half dead on the road? and
 “ He was answered, ‘He that showed mercy on
 “ ‘him.’” (Epis. ad Bonif.)

Now, on this passage I shall pause to make
 but three remarks: First, it shows that the bap-
 tism of infants was in Augustine’s days a settled
 practice of the Church; secondly, that a “great
 “many” were presented in baptism by those who
 were not their parents; and thirdly, that no injury


was done to the baptized by their being presented by those who had transmitted to them no "bond of guilt derived from Adam." We have, then, so far established the antiquity of this institution.

The next point to whose consideration we shall advance, is that of its reasonableness. Let us endeavour to place this upon intelligible and simple ground. It is of the nature and constitution of all communities professing to be societies, that admission to their advantages must be had on the basis of stipulations or conditions. It matters not what the society may be, for the rule holds universally good. It may be a society for the purposes of education, as a school. Perfectly open it is for a parent to seek for his son or daughter admission to its advantages; but, on the other hand, the consent to receive or admit the child must be conditional. The conditions may not be expressed, but at all events they are understood and assumed. Attention to studies, respect for rules, deference to authority, and payment of stipend, are on both sides admitted. It may be that, by a paper to that effect delivered, they may be formally stated; but at any rate they are taken for granted. If the


parent approve of them and assent to them, the contract is completed; and if not, the candidate must be withdrawn or rejected. Or, it may be a merely social institution, but still its constitution is determined by regulations, to which all members are expected to defer, and without adoption of which, expressed or understood, no candidate will be admitted to membership. Or, it may be a literary society, in which laws exist for the preservation of books, the transmission of them in rotation to others, and the due payment of subscription—laws these strictly necessary to the well-being and permanence of the undertaking. And if, in any of these cases, persons appearing as candidates for admission to privileges were allowed to take their places as members, totally unbound by the rules whereby they are governed, the result, in time, must be confusion, dissatisfaction and failure. The Church is in some such sense a Society; not a mere aggregate of persons, existing in a state of irregularity and incoherency, without laws to bind them, or provision made for the good conduct of members. A society—not for purposes social or literary, but for the higher purpose of maintaining God's Truth on earth,

extending it to the end of the world, and rearing up a population of God-fearing and God-loving individuals. These are the ends she aims at, and these ends would surely be imperilled, if not defeated, did she not demand pledges bearing upon the belief and the moral condition of those accepted into her communion. A character she has to maintain, for her people are "called to be saints," and expected to "glorify God in body and spirit, which are His." And improvident would she be, and equally unfaithful to her position and her objects, did she not demand from those who seek her communion some guarantee that they shall not discredit, but do honour to her name.

We advance this proposition a stage further when we affirm that it is reasonable, that if such guarantees cannot be given by the persons immediately interested, they must be given by others interested for them. Reasonable, we say, is this, for it is sanctioned by the universal usages of society. The child seeking admission to a school, has no right to expect that his or her assurances shall be received as satisfactory. The feebleness of childhood, its ignorance of duties, and its in-



ability to meet instruction by recompence, are sufficient to throw it out of that position altogether. Neither would a child presume to offer its own guarantee, nor would the principal of the establishment be expected to receive it. And in this state of personal incompetency some vicarious guarantee must be given, or the child must go without education. It is the same in the case of a man who may have drawn on himself the frown and suspicion of the law. Imprisonment may be his fate, unless bail for his future good conduct be tendered. Not sufficient are either his assurances of good intentions, or his deposit of a sum to be forfeited in the event of the repetition of his fault. His bailsmen or securities must satisfy the expectations of the law, and bind themselves that it shall not be, by the other, violated. The indentures of an apprentice are founded precisely on the same principle. Into the mysteries of his trade and the sanctity of his house will no master admit the boy, unless guardian or security covenant for his good conduct and the observance of such rules as ought to exist between the parties. All this is reasonable, and because reasonable, therefore in daily use. It is just the same principle that



the Church adopts. She has fully satisfied herself that Infant Baptism is scriptural, that the children of believing parents have a right to take their places in the circle of her members; and, by a necessary consequence, she admits of the institution of sureties. For if that institution exist not, these "little ones," unable to guarantee for themselves, must be denied admission into the fellowship of the faithful. That is simply the other alternative; but it is one which the Church, in justice and charity, is not prepared to adopt. To the cries of these "little ones" at her door she cannot turn a deaf ear; the demand on their parts for participation in the benefits of the household of faith, is one that she has neither heart nor right to scorn. Their inarticulate petitions she is not prepared to despise; and yet she must do it, unless security be tendered. The right of baptism being conceded, the inability of the infant being apparent, the acceptance of sponsors follows as an inevitable consequence.

It has been already stated, that on the point of discipline and necessity there exists no difference of opinion among the Churches. Call the contracting parties godfathers, sponsors, sureties, or

engaging-parents, still the institution is the same. We say not that other Churches have not their preferences as to the persons who shall fill the office, but we say, that as to the office or institution they all think alike. We shall not overload our subject by quotations from the Books of Discipline or the Directories of foreign Churches, but exemplify this fact by a reference to the opinions of two bodies at home — the Puritans of England and the Presbyterians of Scotland — bodies both disposed to regard with an eye of distrust the discipline of the Church of England. Among the exceptions taken by the former to the Prayer-book of the Church we find this declaration : — “ They excepted to the use of “ godfathers and godmothers, to the exclusion of “ parents from being sureties for the education of “ their own children. If parents were dead, or in “ a distant country, they were as much for sponsors who should undertake for the education of “ the child, as their adversaries.”* This declaration expresses strict Puritan opinions. Yet it is worthy of notice, that the objections of these

* Neal’s “ History of the Puritans,” vol. i. c. v. Appendix H.


men did not travel to the length of condemning "stranger sponsors" altogether, as a thing unnatural and unreasonable, but, on the contrary, admitted of them in certain contingencies. And from their views we learn, first, that they heartily embraced the institution in the **general**; and secondly, that they more than tolerated the idea of sponsorship lying in the hands of others than parents. The "Overtures of the General Assembly" concerning Discipline in 1705, take up precisely the same ground. In the 1st and 2nd clauses of the fourth head of that document we find the following:—"1st. Children born within the verge " of the visible Church, of parents one or both " professing the Christian religion, *have a right* " to baptism. 2ndly. It being the duty of Christ- " ian parents to devote their children to God by " baptism, and to covenant for their education in " the faith of Christ, no other sponsor is to be " taken *unless the parents be dead or absent, or* " *grossly ignorant, or under scandal not re-* " *moved*; such being unfit to stand for sponsors " in transacting a solemn covenant with God: in " which cases the parent is required to provide " some fit person and if it can be, one related as

“a parent to the child should be sponsor.” It will be observed, that the relaxations of the rule in this passage are carried further than in the former quotation. But both declare the institution necessary, and both confess that “stranger sponsors” are, under certain circumstances, admissible.

We have endeavoured to show all fairness towards the opinions of those who take a different view from ourselves on this secondary point, and are now at liberty to pass on to another consideration,—the claim which our own rule has upon respect. The question we have now to answer is this,—On what ground is it that the Church of England takes a different line from other Churches, and insists on others beside parents undertaking the spiritual guardianship of the child? We are prepared to defend our usage on the plea, 1st. of the simple necessity of the case—the ground admitted in the quotations just presented. Cases may occur in which the parent cannot appear in person for his child. He may be debarred from that which many consider his natural position, by death, or absence, or moral disqualifications, and so the child may be left orphaned in a double sense,

destitute of protector and of spiritual guardian. It was just the oft-recurrence of this condition which made the care of children in apostolic and subsequent times a special and sacred duty in the Church. The hand of persecution fell heavily on those who stood in the front of the fight in those days, when "tribulation" and the "entrance into "the kingdom" were words almost synonymous. Martyrdom thinned the Church's ranks, and left many a hearthstone cold and desolate. It became a duty then to "take up" and "to bring up children." There were few things more calculated to leave the heart of the Christian martyr content and undisturbed in his passage from suffering to glory, than the thought that he left behind him some pledged to care for the best interests of his children. To entrust them to the doubtful mercies of a cold and selfish world, that was an anxiety; but to leave them with no one to care for their souls, that was more: it was a trial full of bitterness and anguish. And no better work of charity did the "widows" of St. Paul's time discharge, or one more calculated to make the faithful endure steadfastly, even to death, than that loving office of "bringing up children." That

the spontaneous charity of those times passed into an institution afterwards we have reason to infer from the words of Augustine, telling us that the orphaned ones were almost sure of a home and a shelter with those holy women who had dedicated themselves to the renunciation of family cares, and the adoption of the bereaved offspring of the faithful. But that was an expectation rather than a certainty. The martyr might die in the hope that some would care for his little ones, but that trust rose into something like assurance, if he could leave them to those who had taken vows on their behalf. The case imagined may not occur in our times, but the removal of a father or a mother belongs to all times. And I can conceive of nothing, next to his own prospects of immortality and glory, more likely to shed peace over the believing parent's departure, than the recollection that with him died not care for the spiritual welfare of his children. If our Church have erred in this respect, her error is one of far-seeing and most considerate love; one of those faults (if it be one) which arise rather from an excess than a defect of charity. Tenderly thoughtful of the best interests of those on whom the waters of baptism have




fallen, she surrounds them not merely with the guard of natural, but of spiritual, protection. Jealously observant of her own hopes, she reposes on the thought that she has made assurance doubly sure, by taking securities of religion as well as of nature.

We can tender another argument in apology for our usage. If we bear it not in our mind, the Church appears to have borne it in hers, that for the spiritual welfare of children, they who are often least to be trusted are their own parents. The eye of affection is proverbially dim, and the penetration of affection proverbially blunt. Parental partiality prevented Eli from appreciating the misconduct of his sons, and undue affection made David indulgent to Absalom. If a "man's foes be those of his own household," it is not too much to say, that a child's danger often proceeds from his own parents. Kind, indulgent, loving they may be; judicious and observant they often are not. Well had it been for Esau had Isaac not been gentle, and better had it been for Rehoboam if Solomon had used practically his own Proverbs. It is just here that the voice of impartial wisdom is required—the intervention of some one between the father's fond affection

and the child's unsuspected danger. It is not every acquaintance, or even friend, who will undertake to discharge the delicate and ungrateful duty; for it wounds a father's self-esteem, and touches to the quick a mother's pride. Yet one there is who can do it, for he is the one whose office it is to do it. Told "that it is his part and "duty to see that the child" beside whom he stood at the font "is to be virtuously brought up "to lead a godly and a Christian life," he is privileged to be a counsellor. Cases there are, indeed, in which his intervention is not required and his office but nominal, as when the parents do their duty faithfully and wisely. But the cases of which we speak are different from these; and possibly it was the anticipation of her children being in the hands of parents who were too loving to be just, too indulgent to be judicious, that led our Church to give a share of the guardianship to others, whose wisdom was not liable to be impaired by affection, or their perceptions clouded by partiality.

Let us extend the thoughts thus suggested, by considering more distinctly the advantages of sponsorship, giving precedence to those of which



the child is the immediate recipient. Very possible is it that, this office having degenerated into a thing of ceremony and form, the real benefits of the institution may not be at first view visible. Yet our Church designed that they should be of measureless importance. Taking the infant from the parents' hands, and thereby receiving from them an intimation that they had so far parted with their little one as to make it over to God, the Church returns it to the sponsor, as though she intended by that act to consign it to his peculiar care. For, most undoubtedly, when she laid that creature, newly admitted into the fellowship of Christianity, in his or her arms, she imposed on them the burden of a true responsibility : one which was not to be put aside when the child was replaced under natural care, but which was to cling to its spiritual guardians till its own age of accountability arrived. And, that mistake or ignorance there should be none on this head, the Church allows not the sponsors to pass away from the font without warning them solemnly of their duties, and faithfully pointing out the way in which they were to be discharged. In the address delivered, ambiguity or reserve


there is none:—"Forasmuch as this child hath
"promised by you his sureties to renounce the
"devil and all his works, to believe in God, and
"to serve Him; ye must remember, that it is
"your parts and duties to see that this Infant be
"taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn what
"a solemn vow, promise, and profession, he hath
"here made by you. And that he may know
"these things the better, ye shall call upon him
"to hear sermons; and chiefly ye shall provide,
"that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer,
"and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar
"tongue, and all other things which a Christian
"ought to know and believe to his soul's health."
Words more solemn there could hardly be, or
words more explicit and intelligible. Negligent a
sponsor may be; ignorant he cannot be. Yet it
may be asked, Practically and plainly what can a
sponsor do? The reply is, Much every way. Is
not the throne of grace open to him? May he not
take up in faith that little one and lay him down
before the Lord, even as the ruler laid before
Him his dying child? Is it denied to him,
kindly, lovingly, wisely, to press on its opening
mind the love of God to man, to remonstrate

with it on discovered passions, to elicit simple confidences, to give direction to young thoughts, to help in the formation of opinions, to gain in childhood such an influence as may make interference in after life to be received rather as a kindness than an intrusion. Is all this, or any of this, an impossibility? And if this, or much of this, were lovingly and wisely done, might we not hope to see our children "a generation better than their fathers"—beings "brought up in the nurture of the Lord," and "adorn-
ing the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things?" At any rate, if try it we do not, we are evading a clear duty, and surrendering a mighty opportunity for usefulness. Something it is to "see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in our hands;" and something to stand before the Lamb hereafter, when He is making up His jewels, attended by those to whom we have been of service, and to say—not in pride, but in humblest gratitude—"Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

We may throw the advantages of the sponsorial institution into another aspect. Most men feel that, in the hardened and artificial condition

of modern society, some things are wanted to establish links between man and man of a more sacred character than those which spring from the ordinary intercourses of life. Something there is in life, as it at present exists, which separates rather than unites. We say not that many circumstances which throw men into contact with their fellow-men do not create, after a manner, some points of unity among them; but all feel that these are at best superficial and conventional. The interchange of courtesies, the casual greetings in the market-place, the consultations respecting the same object—all these and such-like doubtless draw men together; but the effects of such friction seldom extend beyond the hour of contact. There is in them nothing deep, solemn, or penetrating to the inner sanctuaries of the human heart. It is all “of the earth, earthy.” Might not such a relationship as that we are advocating meet, in some measure, the want? For it ought, if widely extended, to prove a sort of amalgam to society. There are few objects to which a man’s emotions and regards descend more truly, than to those who owe their existence to him; none for whose welfare he is more con-

cerned, or for solicitude for whom he feels more grateful. Is it nothing that one man can say to another, "I gave that child to its spiritual mother, the Church, and she gave it back to thee; brother, let us strive together for its good?" Is it nothing that one man can say to his fellow-man, "Brother, we stood together at the same font, and we prayed side by side over this child; united we were then, united let us be always?" Is it nothing that a father sees his friend bending down to his child's weaknesses, striving to plant or cultivate a spark of grace in its young soul, yearning over it for its spiritual good? It might well recall the touching scene of Scripture story, when the great prophet of Israel, moved as well by a mother's deep distress as her submissive faith, hastened to the chamber where her child—God's special gift to her—lay in the rigidity of death, and, contracting his dimensions to those of the little one out of whom life seemed to have for ever passed away, "put his mouth to his mouth, and his eyes on his eyes, and his hands upon his hands," till the cold flesh waxed warm, and the beating pulse told that a second time the spirit from above had entered



into him. In spiritual experience such things might happen again ; for the son might, like the prodigal, live to disappoint hope and to be reckoned among the "twice dead." And if a sponsor be the instrument in the hands of that God "with whom are the issues of life and "death," of recalling a slumbering soul out of lethargy, or a lapsed one to penitence and conversion, who can measure the strength of the tie which would, closer than ever, draw together the natural parent who had mourned over a son as lost, and the spiritual parent who had the privilege of saying "Thy son liveth !"

There is one advantage more which accrues from this institution —not to the child or parent, but to the Church. Clearly her object is this, to train up a "right godly seed," to bring up children in "the way they should go," and "to make "ready a people prepared for the Lord." And for the effecting of this, no doubt, she relies much on the co-operation of those who have covenanted to see to it that her "children are brought up to lead "a godly and a christian life." But, often through the negligence of sureties is this merciful provision set aside, and then, to compensate for its defects,

a clumsier and more elaborate one set up, from necessity, in its stead. For what are our Sunday Schools and Bible Classes, but attempts to make up for the want of domestic education and training? What are Confirmation preparations, but a hasty and insufficient doing of that which ought to have been doing for many years before? If anything beyond another demonstrates how utterly the active duties of the sponsor have fallen into desuetude and inefficiency, it is the state in which the young frequently reach our hands on the edge of their Confirmation. That Ordinance which, after the lapse of fourteen or fifteen years, is intended to act as the complement to Baptism, finds them for the most part so ignorant of "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ," that the minister's part is not to examine and certify, but to educate and prepare. I do protest that, looking at the pledges uttered at Baptism, it is a reproach and a scandal that such things should be. It is hardly our business to cast censure on others in the presence of those whose best interests have been thus neglected; but, were we disposed to do so, we might well ask them what had been done by their sponsors in redemption of their solemn

assurances? That ignorance of the Catechism, that unconsciousness of the real nature of prayer, that utter inability to prove the articles of the Creed, that meagre conception of the meaning of the Commandments,—whence arises all this if sponsors have kept their word? And now intemperate men cast in our teeth the ungodliness of our population, asking us, in tones which express more of gratified triumph than of Christian sadness,—“Are these the children of God, these “the members of Christ?” Ah, me! my loved and deceived Mother, truly, truly thou art “wounded in the house of thy friends!”

We come now to the last point on which we think it needful to touch—the objections brought by our assailants against the system of sponsorship, and the form it assumes in our Services. Not that it is purposed at present to enter into the promise uttered or the belief expressed, as that will with more fitness come into our intended comments on the Baptismal Service. But some objections there are of a more general character, without notice of which it were unfitting to close the chapter. The first of these, without descending into particulars, directs itself against the system

altogether, for it intimates that the whole thing is vicious. That substitution of one person for another; that taking the words (as it were) out of the infant's mouth, and putting them in that of its representative; that confusion of individuals, which sees one under the appearance of another—the whole conception is pronounced wrong and deserving of being swept away as a remnant of an antiquated superstition. Now, to all this there is but one answer to make,—that it is a necessary consequence of the baptism of infants. If baptized, it must be on promises made; and if these promises be not made by them, or some one for them, then cannot they be baptized at all. “That,” our opponents will reply, “is just the dilemma to which we wish to drive you. Why baptize infants at all?” Nay; our rejoinder is, “Why do ye *not* baptize them?” For us, we dare not to deny them that which is their inheritance. “The promise is to us and to our children,” as surely as the promise of the elder covenant was to Abraham and his circumcised descendants of eight days old. In virtue of their descent from parents Christian by profession, they have a right of admission to covenant privileges, and of that

right we dare not defraud them. No men felt more pressed in the spirit to stand aloof from all that savoured of the corruption of Rome than our Fathers of the Reformation; no men more unsparingly applied the axe to the root of the tree of superstition; but over that Infant Right they dared not to step, for they felt that it would be like "removing the landmark of the fatherless" "and the widow."

The second objection made assumes a different form. On this act of uttering promises for others there has been poured out a positive deluge of invective. It is an act of "atrocious," "an insult to the all-gracious Father," "vows involving practical falsehood," "false and untruthful promises." And then men are asked, "Whether they dare for themselves vow these renunciations of the devil and his works?" If all this be so, then must not simply the Church of England but the world at large be in a condition of deplorable dishonesty? Might it not strike men of the most ordinary observation and reflection, that pledges on behalf of others are matters of everyday, common-place occurrence? The man who has been guilty of some outrage for which the law

condemns him, is released from threatened imprisonment only on the ground that another acts as surety that he shall keep the peace. Yet that surety cannot promise absolutely for himself, and how can he dare to act as surety for another? Human passions are strong, stimulating provocations are many, Satan is seductive, and man is feeble. How knows he that all these elements of insubordination may not some day come out in such force as to urge the subject of his intervention to repeated outrage? Ought he to make such a promise as that? Again, we read in the records of mercantile enterprise, that men covenant that ships laden with their rich cargoes shall, on a prescribed and stipulated day, make their appearance at the port to which they are bound. Is it not "atrocious" that men should promise that which they have no power for fulfilling? May not a thousand things interfere to prevent the assurance becoming a certainty? There are tempestuous winds, which may strand the vessel on her progress; raging seas, which may hurry her to the deep; nautical incompetency, which may cast her off her course; and mechanical derangements, which may leave her helpless on the ocean. How can men dare to

engage for that which it is out of their power to fulfil? Or, to bring the matter nearer home, is there any transaction of life more ordinary than that by which a guardian, signing the indentures of a boy, pledges himself that that boy shall be true and faithful to his employer, attentive to his duties, sober, orderly, upright, and docile? Is it not "atrocious" that any man "should venture to "make such a promise for any other person?" Is not boyish fickleness proverbial? are not the world's temptations ensnaring, and evil example corrupting, and moral tendencies averse to goodness? And with such fearful chances against them, are not such engagements mockery and deception? Why, what ignorance, or worse than ignorance, is this! Are men incapable of understanding the difference between a moral and a mathematical certainty; the one admitting of exceptions, the other of none? Does not every pledge made rest on the understanding that a man promises only to the extent of his power? But, if the fact that there are chances against the fulfilment of a promise is to be an argument against the making of it, the result will be that promises there will be none. We shall not engage to leave our homes in

the morning or return to them at night, because things unforeseen and unexpected may prevent it.

We are quite prepared to admit that the instances we have adduced, borrowed from social and mercantile usages, are not strictly parallel with the case to which they are applied. Nor are they produced as being strictly parallel, but only sufficient in the way of illustration of a principle. No doubt the liability of the legal bailsmen or security terminates in the payment of the penalty which he is bound to discharge, in the event of the departure of the principal from the terms of the agreement. But underneath that provision there lies another, namely, that the person who steps in between the law and the criminal, between the master and the apprentice, is expected to do all that lies in his power to make the principal party obedient to the engagements contracted. Having done that, his moral responsibility ceases, although the legal responsibility remains. And, clearly, no more is demanded or expected in the case of sponsors for infants at baptism. No man is required to do aught beyond his power, however he may be expected to do all up to his power. The child for whom he covenants he cannot, by

any act of his own, or any amount of earnestness he may exhibit, make virtuous, religious, or holy. That rests with the "God of the spirits of all flesh ;" with whom also it rests "to turn men's hearts, "as it seems best to His Godly wisdom." With Him lie the effects, with man lie the acts ; with Him the results, with us the means. And all that the Church could expect comes to no more than that which any social institution demands—that a person accepted as surety should fulfil the duty of a surety. If not, the penalty must be paid ; not by fine, but as all penalties in instances lying between God and man must be paid—by blood which "cleanseth from all sin." For sin it is to vow and not perform, to engage and then repudiate engagements. Let men make, in their carelessness of it, what they will, it is a trust betrayed and an oath broken. And let the result of the transaction be what it may, no man is released of his responsibility before God until he can say,—By prayers, by expostulations, by precept and example, by instruction and warning, I have done what I could.

We pretend not to say, that there are not men who come to the font in a spirit of utter formality,

and perhaps in a state of deplorable ignorance as to the responsibility they are undertaking ; a state which we mourn over as much as others. But this we do say, that neither of those sins lies at the Church's door. If she accepts their asseverations, she labours to make them understand their duties. That address to sponsors is sounded in their ears, lies on the pages of their Prayer-books, and is open to them day and night for their consideration, if they will. Well would it be for the interests of godliness if profession and principle always meant the same thing. But, after all, what is the history of man at large but one of bold engagement and falsified promise ? " Though I " should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." " Man, I know him not !"

The simple fact is this, that sponsors promise ; that the Church receives the infant presented on the strength of those promises, and relies on them to fulfil them. It is there that the doubtful may, by God's grace, be converted into the certain. The plant will not grow without culture, nor the infant thrive without care. Of God's faithfulness to His covenant promises we are sure ; of man's faithfulness to claim and appropriate them we are

not sure. What we want are Faith, Prayer, and Pains. But let not the institution be blamed because the actors in it are faulty. Never was an arrangement conceived by a Church more considerate or gracious, more likely to effect the great design of training up souls for Christ and advancing the interests of His kingdom. And seldom has an institution promising so much glory to God been so nullified by the unfaithfulness of man.


CHAPTER VI.

THE BAPTISMAL SERVICE.


IN the due order of the prosecution of our subject we are called upon to examine that part of our Services which we call the Office for the Administration of Baptism of Infants; partly because that service has been made the object of much censorious observation on the part of the enemies of our Church, and partly because it is much misunderstood by her friends. So much has been done to assail it, and comparatively so little to defend it, that it may be well to seize the opportunity afforded by the discussion of the subject of Baptism, to throw out some considerations which may perhaps tend to its better estimation. And before advancing to the examination of the principles on which that service is constructed, it

may be as well to say something of the rules which guided the compilers of the Liturgy generally in the composition of our Prayer-book.


It was the desire of those men to whom this great national work was entrusted, to adhere as much as possible to the institutions of early times. They clearly understood, that at the Reformation no new or modern Church was to be reared up in England. Their business was not to create but to restore. From times probably apostolic the Church of Christ had existed in this country, striking its roots down deeply, and outliving many a storm which threatened its overthrow. True it is, that as times rolled on they brought with them that which time for the most part does — deterioration and declension. The corruptions which attached themselves to Christianity everywhere did not leave her unaffected. The departures from the simplicity and purity of the early faith, which begot from time to time remonstrance and demand for reform, were to be traced as legibly upon her as upon the other sections of the Church Catholic. For, if the Albigenses and men of the Vaudois valleys uttered their protests abroad, Wickliffe and the Lollards loudly exposed abuses at home. But, defiled as it was by additions and



the incrustations of ages, the stately fabric still lived on. There was no need "to destroy the "carved work with axes and hammers," to pull down its walls and dig up its foundations, when the judicious removal of vicious excrescences would restore the edifice to its original beauty. The policy as well as the duty of the Reformers was Restoration, not Destruction. And therefore they respected what primitive times had sanctioned, and resolved to maintain connexion with the Catholic and the Ancient, by refusing to surrender the precious legacies of those better days. They found reason to believe that the government which the Apostles had given to the Church was episcopal, and they determined to retain it. They found that the Church in the early times worshipped in her public assemblies by liturgical prayers, and they resolved that they would do likewise. They found certain usages of ancient standing—some supported by early precedents, and some not contrary to them—and they refused to part with either. They found certain rites and ordinances running through past ages, and running up to very distant ones, and they saw no reason to abandon them. But, through all, they were guided by one great principle,—never to



respect Antiquity at the cost of Truth. In matters of Faith they laid down the rule, to be adhered to inexorably, "that whatsoever is not read in Holy Scripture, or proved thereby, is not to be required of any man to be believed as an article of faith;" and as to matters of Form or things indifferent, they required that at least they should not be in opposition to the one great criterion,—the written Word. It was on these principles that they compiled and composed our Liturgy. The service-books of the ancient churches supplied them with a rich repository of liturgical treasures, and out of them they culled and gleaned the best and most unctional for their own use. Prayers there were in the liturgies by Basil, Chrysostom, Cyril, Clement, of wonderful beauty and confessed spirituality, but containing thoughts and expressions beyond the line of restriction they laid down for their guidance. And such were rigidly and carefully expunged; for to follow antiquity was one thing, and to adhere to truth another. So strictly was this principle followed, that in the Revision of the Liturgy in 1661, the Royal Commission under which the Revisors acted gave them power only "to compare the Common Prayer-



“book with the most ancient Liturgies that had
“been used in the Church in the most primitive
“and purest times . . . avoiding as much as possible
“all unnecessary alterations of the forms and liturgy
“wherewith the people are altogether acquainted!”
Nothing short of a comparison of these ancient prayers with our own will convey a clear idea of the pains and accuracy bestowed on this great work, of the penetration of the compilers, and the rectitude of their conduct. And one feature there is which distinguishes this act from those of others who attempted the same thing — the invariable appeal to the test to which we have just alluded. When Augustine, for example, came to this country on his mission in the sixth century, he received advice from Gregory the Great not to impose the Missal of Rome on the British Church, but to collect for a national liturgy the best out of all others. But there was in that suggestion no recognition of the higher principle, “so that they
“be in accordance with the Word of God.”

Now, in dwelling on that particular part of our Liturgy called the Baptismal Service, it is not intended to present a commentary on the exhortations, prayers, or confessions of which

it is composed. That would not answer the object before us: at all events, it would so involve that object in a mass of irrelevant matter, that it would be liable to be lost to our view. Our purpose is not exposition, but defence; and, therefore, I propose to analyse the Service for the purpose of determining the principles on which it rests. If those principles be found to be right and scriptural, it may be we shall have the less censure heaped upon its expressions; and I think we shall find that the leading principles on which it rests are these four:—1. That, by nature, man is alienated and disconnected from God. 2. That Baptism is a covenant, by means of which he is brought into a condition of connexion with God. 3. That the blessings of that covenant are not conveyed mechanically, but are obtained from God's free grace by faith and prayer. And, lastly, that the full participation of mercies and privileges, sealed and prospectively handed over, is dependent on pains taken to claim and secure them. These principles, it is contended, are sound and scriptural; and on these it is again contended that this service is constructed. If its expressions convey these, and nothing more than


these, the conclusion ought to be conceded, that those who have held it up to reproach are bound, if upright and honourable, to confess that they have misconceived it.

Now, the first of those principles is one which few of any communion will question. It lies on the threshold of the service; for the first words which fall from the lips of the minister officiating are admissive of the doctrine of man's universal sinfulness; not merely in virtue of his acts, but in consequence of his nature. "Foras-
" much as all men are conceived and born in sin,
" and that our Saviour Christ saith none can enter
" into the kingdom of God except he be regenerated
" and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost," &c. This is a plain recognition of man's state, and the consequences to which it tends. On neither of these positions is it necessary to dwell. The first is the repetition of Scripture, and the second is not only that, but a logical inference from it. And both form the necessity for some act or process by which we are brought out of a condition of alienation and introduced into one of hope and promise. But the point on which it is necessary to be accurate is that of the

“sin” which is here affirmed to attach to all men born into this world. It may be expressive of that inherent corruption of our nature which we inherit from sinful parents; or it may, besides, represent that guilt which attaches to us as the offspring of disloyal parents. The former of these is a fault of nature; the second is an unhappiness of condition. Corruption has descended to us, like a taint and tendency in the blood, from those who allowed evil to enter into their constitutions; and in virtue of their own depraved or vitiated nature, a proclivity to evil has become the moral misfortune of their descendants. All this is “birth-sin,” or inherent depravity. But, over and beyond this, there is another evil under which we labour—the guilt of the sin committed by our first parents. Just as a deed of attainder struck against a disloyal ancestor clings to his descendants, be they never so loyal themselves, stripping him and them of estates and honours; so does Adam’s treason, not constitutionally only, but criminally also, attach to his offspring. The posterity of the Gibeonites of the days of Joshua might, personally, be ever so faithful and loyal, and, as

such, worthy of a place in the commonwealth of Israel; but they were Gibeonites still—scions of a doomed stock, who, on account of idolatry and abominations, were cut off from fellowship with God's people. Anything but perpetrators of their ancestors' sins they might be; but they were of the corrupt stock, and sentenced therefore to be the bondmen of the congregation. In other words, the criminality of their forefathers clung to them like a deed of attainder.

And, with regard to Christians, both these evils need removal: the one, through that change of nature popularly termed Regeneration—properly, Conversion; the other, by the application of the blood of Jesus, through, mostly, some instrument of His own appointment. The one expires slowly and gradually, disappearing (though never completely in this life eradicated) before the advance and expulsive power of sanctification. The other, being not of nature but of state, may, as in the case of an act of royal favour and forgiveness, be removed by a word or a deed. But the removal of both is necessary. If corruption be not overcome, a man wants that “holiness, “without which no man may see the Lord.” If



guilt be not cancelled, a man is still reckoned a criminal: not on account of actual transgressions, but on account of his being one of the lineage of the Rebel. The first principle, then, which the service recognises is, that man is in this double sense sinful, and requiring to be brought into a new moral state and into altered relations. That this double sense of the expression, "sin," must be taken, will, I think, appear more distinctly, when we come to consider some points in the second principle on which the Services stand.


That second principle is this,—that in Baptism we enter into a real covenant with God. In a former part of this work we have seen that the foundation of this is the covenant that God made with Abraham. In that act, God separated the father of the faithful from the rest of mankind, established relations between him and Himself, conveyed to him prospective blessings, and impressed upon him and his the seal of the covenant in the form of Circumcision. It will be seen from this sketch of that compact, that everything commenced in God's free goodness; that the blessings promised were to be realised at some

future time; and that, on the side of Abraham and his descendants, obedience was demanded as their part of the covenant. The mercies expected were not to be permanently theirs irrespective of that obedience, but dependent on it; and the seal of the covenant impressed on Israel acted with a double significance: first, as a pledge on the part of God; and secondly, as an obligation on men. "He that was circumcised was a debtor "to do the whole law." And therefore, both in the Psalms and in the Prophets, the burden of God's complaint perpetually is, that "the people "abode not in His covenant;" and their deprivation of the promised land and liberty is ever attributed to this their unfaithfulness. All this proves that that covenant was no ideal thing, but the very foundation of separation from other nations, and of precious privileges to be realised in time, but then made over to them as a peculiar people under the seal of circumcision. On that depended participation in the advantages of the covenant; for those advantages lay with the commonwealth of Israel, and the uncircumcised child was to be cut off from that community. And, as we learn from Acts, iii. 19-26, and Luke, ii.

68-79, that covenant, so far from being limited to Abraham and his natural descendants, is continued to all who are united to Jesus, the central point and promise of the whole transaction. The first of these passages, by extending those mercies to "all the kindreds of the earth," made them to be of world-wide application; and the second, by promising that "the day-spring" was "to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death," gave to them an equally extensive range. And be it observed, that both of them comprehend the same feature of "the blotting out" and the "remission of sins"—a feature this augmented in Acts, ii. 38, by "the gift of the Holy Ghost." These are the very blessings which in this service we claim for our children: "We call upon Thee for this infant, that he, coming to Thy holy baptism, may receive remission of sins by spiritual regeneration, and enjoy the everlasting benediction of Thy heavenly washing." The very things recognised are these—"the release of sins, the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, the kingdom of heaven, and everlasting life." So far, then, the expectations of the service are in entire accordance

with blessings admitted to belong to the covenant.

Now, if we be asked on what ground it is that these great mercies are expected, the answer is, that the whole service goes on the supposition that there is a renunciation of our old relations and an entrance on new ones. That is plainly the meaning of the questions put and the conditions demanded. "Dost thou renounce the devil
"and all his works?" "Dost thou believe in
"God and Christ?" "Wilt thou be baptized in
"this faith?" If this be not a solemn abandonment of the old natural condition, and an entrance upon a new one, I know not what words can mean. If it be not a declared turning from Satan and a declared turning to Christ, words have no signification. And if it be so, surely those acts are nothing short of a deliberate closing with the covenant-mercies offered, and a claiming of everything which, through Christ, God has settled on His people. We say not, that all who use these words, and go through these acts, do so intelligently and faithfully, any more than any modern Baptist at the font is necessarily the devout and spiritual man he appears to be. But our point



does not lie with the honesty or dissimulation of men, but with the soundness of the services which they use. Truth may be preached by a hypocrite, and yet be truth notwithstanding.

But it is of more importance, while discussing this principle of baptism being the entrance on a covenant with God, to determine the blessings which are attached to that act. These, beyond doubt, are Pardon, Endowments and Inheritance—all recognised in the service before us. As to the first of these, it will be perceived that forgiveness of sins is the thing asked for and expected. "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin." "Ye have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive him; to release him of his sin . . . that he, being delivered from Thy wrath," &c. Now at this point the question arises, "What sins are expected to be forgiven?" Not actual sin; for that has not, and cannot, in the case of infants, be done. Not inherent or birth-sin; for that is the special subject of the ante-consecration prayer, "Grant that all carnal affections may die—that the Old Man may be so buried that the New Man may be raised up in him." If it be neither of these,

there remains but that very guilt lying on every one born into this world, on account of our progenitor's treason. If it be said, that that is the asserted removal of a criminality without consciousness or concurrence of the person concerned, then do we answer, that the imputation of it is without his consciousness or concurrence either. If it be attached under these circumstances from no fault or complicity, why may it not be detached under the same circumstances? And if we have doubt of that guilt being taken away then, in an ordinance of our Lord's own appointment, in which, confessedly, persons pass from the first Adam to the second, then let us determine where, how, or when it is taken away. Doubtless, apart from any ordinance at all God may take it away, as He can give faith without hearing, and gifts without prayer, and strength without bread; but doubtless, also, it is God's way to work through channels, and to honour rites and instruments of His own creation. If not, we had better repudiate all forms in religion altogether, and descend to the abstractions of Quakerism. In so clear a light is this point put by Bishop Taylor, that I gladly suspend the argument to quote his


words:—"Baptism doth not heal the wounds of
" actual sins, because they (infants) have not
" committed them, but it takes off the evil of
" original sin; whatsoever is imputed to us by
" Adam's prevarication is washed off by the death
" of the Second Adam, into which we are baptized
" Either infants must be for ever without re-
" medy in this evil consequent of their father's sin,
" or they must be adopted into the participation
" of Christ's death, which is the remedy. And
" how can they partake of Christ's death but by
" baptism into His death? If there be no
" spiritual way extraordinary, then the ordinary
" way is only left to them Since infants
" have the punishment of sin, it is certain that
" sin is imputed to them, and therefore they need
" being reconciled to God by Christ."*

It would seem, then, that in those passages of the service in which the pardon of sin is sought for, the immediate benefit is the obliteration of Adam's guilt attached to them. We say not that, over and beyond this, there is not sealed to them sacramentally the pardon of actual sin sought for afterwards in repentance and faith, only that that is

* "Of the Baptism of Infants," vol. ii. p. 176.


not the very object of those petitions. There is no doubt that, whatever else a baptized one carries away from baptism, he carries away this — the assurance of pardon, to be bestowed whenever, as with Peter, it is looked for in bitter and gracious tears. That is the view of our Articles — “the promises of forgiveness of sin are visibly signed and sealed.” But if there be, besides this prospective, an immediate benefit in this direction to be expected, it seems but just and natural to limit it to the removal of the guilt which we have inherited from our first father.

If that be the first blessing resulting from this covenant act, there is a second recognised in the service, of the nature of Endowments conferred. Again we advert to the opening expression borrowed from St. John, iii. 5,—“ Except a man be regenerate, and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost;” and again, in the same Introduction, “ that he may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost.” It will be observed how closely this sentence follows in the language of Scripture, both expressing the same judgment, that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. At this point



the question at once arises,—Do these two phrases, “Water” and “the Holy Ghost,” mean the same thing? Is the “washing with water” and the bestowal of the Spirit the same thing? I have little hesitation in saying, No. Regarded by many, both in the original passage and the service, as the same—the one being a repetition or amplification of the other, it seems more likely that they are distinguishable from each other. Both may denote operations of the Spirit, yet different operations of the Spirit: for water cleanses and removes impurities, but does not add aught to the individual. And if the Spirit, represented as water and fire, purifies, yet, after all, that is but stripping from a man that which is foul, not adding to him that which is strengthening and gracious. Whether our Lord’s words unequivocally point to Baptism or not, I undertake not to say; only this, that if they do, they express a stronger thought than we have in Mark, xvi. 16; for that says, “He that believeth not shall be damned;” and this, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” The one excludes from heaven simply for lack of faith; the other, for lack of that and baptism.

However this may be, it seems clear enough that the washing with water implies a negative, and the conferring of the Spirit a positive, benefit: that is, the one removes and the other adds. As to what precise nature or degree the donation or endowment of the Spirit in baptism may be, it were presumptuous to say. That it is not that total and radical change of the whole being from sin to holiness which is the popular notion of Regeneration, must, I think, be confessed by every one who has the slightest acquaintance with our service. That it means simply the benefit of introduction to the Church, without any spiritual grace of any kind or degree, appears to overthrow the notion of a sacrament; for we view that as having an "inward grace as well as outward sign." That it may be the implantation of a seed, or germ, of power, which may be killed wilfully or perish heedlessly, seems by no means improbable. And if to such an explanation it be replied, that that is spiritual advantage mechanically obtained for a creature unconscious of the blessing and therefore incompetent to receive it; then we answer, first, that that which is asked in prayer is anything but mechanically obtained, for it is sought for in the



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way of God's own appointment; secondly, that if an infant is competent to receive a bias or tendency to corruption, there seems no reason why it should be incompetent to receive a bias or power towards goodness; for, surely, the soul which is open to Satan cannot be held to be sealed against the Spirit; and, thirdly, that it is quite a different thing to obtain a blessing *through* an ordinance and *from* an ordinance. The one makes it a means or channel; the other makes it a power or agent. The one recognises it as an instrument of God, to be used or not by Him as seems good to His sovereign, independent will; the other makes it a fountain, out of which grace may be lifted, as a man would secure a draught by simply plunging a vase into the water. If grace procured through (not from) this ordinance be, therefore, mechanically obtained, there is no ordinance at all against which the same objection may not lie. It may as reasonably be said, that salvation coming to man through prayer is salvation mechanical, as that grace coming through baptism is mechanical. In both instances, the power sought lies in the hands of God; and that hand may remain closed, or, opening itself, may pour out its gifts through any

channel of His merciful selection. If we scruple at that, we must discard from religion all means whatsoever. On this point, nothing can be more express than the language of the earliest authorities of the Reformation. "Many errors," says the "Reformatio Legum," "are promulgated respecting Baptism, which some regard with so much astonishment, that they believe the Holy Spirit will emerge from the outward element itself, and that His power and virtue by which we are regenerated, and grace, and all the other benefits proceeding from it, actually swim in the baptismal font. In short, they will have it, that our entire regeneration is owing to that sacred well which is the object of our senses. But the salvation of souls, the renewing of the Spirit, and the privilege of adoption as the sons of God, proceed from the Divine mercy abounding towards us through Christ," &c. (Chap. xviii.) We have the same distinct doctrine in "Nowell's Catechism:"—"Master. Do we not, then, obtain forgiveness of sins by the outward washing or sprinkling of water? Scholar. No; for only Christ hath with His blood washed, and clean washed away, the spots of our souls. This

“honour, therefore, it is unlawful to give to
“the outward element. But the Holy Ghost,
“as it were, sprinkling our consciences with
“that holy blood, wipeth away all the spots of
“sin, making us clean before God. Of this
“cleansing of our sins we have a sure pledge
“in the sacrament.”

The last blessing which our service traces to the covenant into which the baptized enter, is that of the inheritance of the kingdom. As was stated before, this necessarily follows from the position of being “a member of Christ and a child of God.” Our adoption into the family of God—not spiritual, but ecclesiastical—carries the hope of a child’s provision. Therefore is it prayed, that the child taken into covenant “may come to the land of everlasting life,” “to the kingdom promised,” “and be made an heir of everlasting salvation.” Therefore do friends and sureties trust that doubtless “God will graciously receive that infant; give to him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of His kingdom.” There can be no doubt that all this is prospective; and, as we shall see presently, conditional. Never could it have been the idea

of the compilers of the service, that by the simple administration of baptism the subject of that act was made sure of everlasting glory. Such a conception (and our detractors know it) is in entire inconsistency with those subsequent petitions of the service which recognise the hard conflict of the Christian in passing through this world, and ask for him "power and strength for victory," and with those charges delivered to the sponsors, to aid the young Christian "in leading a godly " and a Christian life." But surely it is something for the confirmation of faith and the increase of hope to have those title-deeds of promise put into his hands, to be looked at in after-life as the foundation of high expectations, and as proofs that the gates of the better land are open to him, if he will only exercise his rights of "knocking and "asking admission?" We say not that those expectations must be realised, that those pledges must become substances, or those promises fulfillments. For that involves the question of man's action, and we are only now considering God's declarations. "Straitened" we may be, and, alas! are, in ourselves, and yet anything but "straitened" in Him; confined to the three victories over

Syria, when, if we had chosen, we might have had many more.* Neither do we say that a man may not spend a splendid substance, like the Prodigal, in riotous living; or, like Esau, sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. But that does not prove that the substance is not at his command, or the birthright not legitimately his. It only proves that "God calls and man refuses;" that God provides and man neglects to claim; that God pledges and man looks indifferently on His graciousness. Still, throughout it all, the covenant lives on, signed, sealed, and delivered, if man had but faith to see it and energy to use it. And nothing more or less than this does our Baptismal Service say. In the language of faith the most trustful and reliance the most touchingly childlike, it tells the friends gathering round the little one "not to doubt, but earnestly to believe, " that God will favourably receive it, and make it "partaker of His kingdom." And so said God to Abraham, nearly five centuries before fulfilment; and so said God to Israel, when hesitating on the border of Canaan. The one "staggered not " through unbelief," and reaped the glorious title

* 2 Kings, xiii. 19.

of "Father of believers;" the other drew back from the adventure when the prize was at their feet, and "their carcasses fell in the wilderness."

We return from the consideration of these details to that of the third principle of the service. If Baptism be a passing from a state of imputed guilt to one of freedom from it; and a covenant, assuring of pardon, endowment, and inheritance; it is a principle of the Office that all those blessings are to be sought by faith and prayer. There can be no misconception greater, and no calumny more transparently unfounded, than that which assumes that we expect these benefits from the mere administration of an ordinance; as though, of itself, that ordinance so possessed them within itself as that, by coming in contact with it, we come into possession of them. Surely the distinction between a channel or instrument, and an agent or power, is sufficiently intelligible. Even without prayer, but hardly without faith, it has pleased God to employ things as avenues for mercies. Jordan to Naaman, and Moses' rod to the Red Sea, and the trumpets' blast to Jericho, were all, symbolically or sacramentally, invested with power, while yet in themselves they pos-

sessed none. The way by which God works, and the power which God exercises, are things entirely different from each other. And none but the most ignorant or unscrupulous would ever, with the whole declarations of Articles and the whole apparatus for prayer contained in the Prayer-book before his eyes, have dared to accuse us of such utter superstition. If any man can bring himself to think that we believe that there is conveyed into the water of Baptism a mysterious power of blotting out sins and conferring grace, as though our ministers were performing a magical incantation, his credulity must be greater even than his malice. Whether we look to the service itself, or to that less popular, because more dogmatical, expression of our opinions found in the Articles, we equally find the answer to the mis-statement. In the one, faith and prayer are ever insisted on, ever prominent. "Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe;" "We call upon Thee for this infant;" "You have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive him;" "Regard the supplications of Thy congregation;" "Let us with one accord make our prayer, that this child may lead the

“rest of his life according to this beginning;”
“Ye have heard that our Lord Jesus Christ hath
“promised in His Gospel to grant all these
“things that ye have prayed for;”—what is all
this, but the use of that very instrumentality
on which all men, in all Churches, depend?
What are we doing but that which the most
form-hating Nonconformists are perpetually doing
in public and private service? As well might it
be affirmed, that because we bend the knee in
prayer, therefore all blessings expected flowed
from the assumption of a particular posture. And
this principle, showing itself in every line of our
service, is as broadly enunciated in the Articles as
in the Office. “Faith is conferred and grace in-
“creased by virtue of prayer unto God.” (Art.
xxvii.) In perfect harmony with all this are the
sentiments of our Reformers—men not likely to
sanction or tolerate anything savouring of super-
stition. To take three as specimens of all, we
find the martyr Frith thus writing, — “The out-
“ward sign doth neither give us the Spirit of
“God, neither yet grace—that is, the power of
“God. For if through the washing of the water
“the Spirit of grace were given, then should it

“ follow that whosoever was baptized in water
“ should receive this precious gift: but that is
“ not so. Wherefore I must needs conclude that
“ this outward sign, by any power or influence
“ that it hath, bringeth not that Spirit or the
“ power of God.” In the same strain speaks
Ridley:—“ It is not the water that washes us
“ from our sins; but Christ, by His Word and
“ His Spirit, given to us in baptism, that washeth
“ away our sins that we have of Adam by carnal
“ nature.” I may add to this one sentence from
Bishop Jewell:—“ The water itself is nothing,
“ but, by the working of God’s Spirit, the death
“ and merits of our Lord and Saviour Christ are
“ thereby assured unto us.” In all this, surely,
there is no expectation built either on mechanical
operations or superstitious mystery. The meritor-
ious cause of all blessing is affirmed to be the
sacrifice of Christ; the energising agent, the Holy
Spirit; the visible instrument, the ordinance; and
the educing powers, Faith and Prayer. These be
our principles; are they unscriptural, or calcu-
lated to demoralize a nation?

Our survey of the principles of the service
would not be complete unless we added to all

that has been said, that the fulness of the advantages proffered and hoped for is not to be expected, unless to Faith and Prayer there be added pains taken and practical efforts used. Granted, that pardon of sin to come is promised on repentance ; granted, that spiritual endowments are provided on application ; granted, that a place in the kingdom be assured on claiming it ; still, it is not the doctrine of the Office that those conditions are likely to be complied with, unless there be an apparatus put in play to move the subjects of baptism to be true to themselves. No doubt, that and all mercies may descend on man, unsought, unexpected, and even undesired. But that is not, for the most part, God's way. If a germ or seed of spiritual ability be implanted, helping a child to do battle against Sin, the World, and the Devil, it may, if not called into action and tenderly fostered, languish through neglect, or be strangled by the pressure of surrounding iniquity. The seed in the parable was living and growing up into the plant, yet "the thorns sprang up and "choked it." Pity that there was none standing by, with well-timed solicitude to keep the stronger produce at a distance from the delicate

stem ! Pity that none there were to take note of the unequal struggle, and give the plant a chance for life ! It is just at this point that, practically, and as far as man is concerned, our system fails. A delicate exotic, accustomed to the balmy air of a southern climate, is brought to our chill latitude and entrusted to our keeping. Life it has, and promise there is in it, and perhaps graceful unfoldings of structure, the hints and shadows of mature beauty ; but, for development and health, all dependent on care. Let it be ill-used, denied the warm temperature and the caressing sunlight to which it has been accustomed, refused the refreshing draught for which its roots are pining, exposed to blighting winds and nipping frosts, and it needs no prophet to foretell what its fate must be. You may regard it, except for the intervention of the miracle of the Lord of nature, as already doomed, and be prepared to write upon its withered leaves the epitaph, " Killed by " neglect." And yet, this needed not have been. Doubtless, not all the care we could bestow on that delicate stranger would have ensured absolutely its continued life and progress ; but we should have great confidence, notwithstanding,

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in the effect of judicious management and care. Let no man say, in the arrogance of his Antinomianism, that we are presumptuously attributing to man that which is the prerogative of God. We know well that it is of Him to kill and make alive. We know well that "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." But we also know, that God's prerogative is exercised through man's instrumentality, and that "if any man will not work, neither is he to eat." Practically, the weak point of our system lies in the non-recognition of this principle of the service. Not immediately after baptism administered and prayer made does the Church dismiss the congregation from the font. To the guardians of the new-made Christian does she deliver a charge, which, for explicitness, solemnity, and truth, is second to none. If they knew not their duty before, they know it then. If they understood not their responsibility before, they must understand it then. It is not in the Church, or beside the water of baptism, that the mischief is done or the defect found. It is outside the house of God, in the midst of dangerous seductions, of a "world that lieth in wickedness," of the thousand

temptations that “war against the soul”—it is in the midst of these that the child, the object of so many prayers, and the heir of so many promises, is left—unsheltered by a sponsor’s care, unguarded by a sponsor’s supplication, unaided by a sponsor’s advice—to struggle on as best he may; and perhaps—after a few unavailing efforts, the expiring convulsions of a departing spirit—to make shipwreck of his high hopes, and to add to the undeserved discredit cast upon the name of Christian.

CHAPTER VII.


THE BAPTISMAL SERVICE — OBJECTIONS.

OUR thoughts were given in the last chapter to the construction of the Baptismal Service, and the principles on which it is formed. The intention of the present chapter is to examine into the strength of some special objections brought against that service, and, as far as we are able to do so, to answer and refute them. We shall place them under a double classification; for one order of objections lies against certain expressions used, and another against certain things done.

Now, in a former chapter, we have commented on that unjustifiable mode of controversy which puts a certain interpretation on a word, and then, assuming that an opponent holds it in the same sense, accuses him of dishonesty for predicating that concerning it which in his heart

he does not believe. And to that accusation we put in the plea, that the word in question bears several senses, and that it remained to be proved that the accused used it in the same sense as the accuser. If not, the accusation is clearly false : as false and uncandid as an indictment which accuses a man of drunkenness because he may be intemperate ; that is, passionate. It is to this point we desire to return now, for the purpose of more accurately fixing the senses of a term which has been made innocently the occasion of vexatious controversy.

There is no doubt that the word Regeneration, in its broad, original sense, is employed to denote change or renewal of any kind whatever. It may be applied in this sense to objects which have no relation at all to religion, and into which no moral features enter. Thus, in Greek authors, the original term is constantly used in reference to that change which takes place in the earth's appearance, when winter gives way to the freshness of spring ; by the Stoics, to describe an improved condition of the world ; by Cicero, to express his return to the position and dignities which he had lost at the time of his banishment ;



by Josephus, in reference to feasts celebrated on account of national blessings restored ; by Lucian, to the awakening of a fly out of a state of torpor. It is in that material acceptance we find it used by our Lord in the passage, " Ye which have " followed me, in the regeneration when the Son " of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye " also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the " twelve tribes of Israel." There, it clearly stands for either the resurrection or that renovated, happy condition of things for which " all creation " groaneth." And, most naturally, the word adapted itself to describe that new relation between God and man which is effected at baptism, when the latter, born in a state of sin and alienation, is translated into the professed family of God. In that step there may or may not be any moral features at all. It may be a simple and naked change of condition, unattended by any change of disposition—an alteration in state without any alteration of nature. And the religious act in which such change takes place, as naturally took the designation of a man's Regeneration. In other words, it became a term equivalent to Baptism. Regeneration was Baptism, and Bap-

tism was Regeneration. That it is used by the inspired word and the early writers in this sense is clear enough. "The washing (bath) of regeneration saves," is, beyond doubt, another expression descriptive of a state conferred by the waters of Baptism. And if it be thought that we overstep sound doctrine when we say that "God hath called us to a state of salvation," we have it in our power to reply, that there is nothing stronger in that expression than in the language of the Apostle. Neither the one or the other asserts anything of a man's spiritual condition; but both describe him as recovered from the state of uncovenanted heathenism, and introduced into that state of advantages and privileges which may issue in salvation. To affirm that the Apostle meant that a man's final happiness was secured by the mere fact of his baptism would be a libel against truth, and to accuse the Church of holding a similar opinion is but to exhibit the most lamentable confusion between a salvable and a saved condition. Passages have already been adduced to show, that in that sense of relative change the early writers perpetually used the word. In fact, with them, the understood phrase for

Baptism was Regeneration. And the most conclusive proof we can give of the word carrying with it no necessary moral change is found in that passage of Clemens Alexandrinus, in which he predicates it of our Lord Himself: — “When we are regenerated, we have then received the perfection. As soon as Christ was baptized, presently the voice came from Heaven declaring Him the beloved. Was Christ, as soon as He was regenerated, perfect? or will they be so absurd as to say that He still wanted anything?”* Impossible it is to understand this of anything beyond His baptism. But this point of the equivalence of Baptism with Regeneration will not be disputed by any one who has the slightest knowledge of the writings of the early Fathers. If we have to deal with the uneducated, we must only ask them to receive the assertion on trust.

Neither can there be any doubt that Baptism, being considered a channel for the conveyance of spiritual benefit (of what degree or nature we venture not to say), Regeneration came in some authors to include the idea of that benefit. And


* Σήμερον αναγεννηθεις ο Χριστος ηδη τελειος εστι, η οπις αποπνυτατον ελλειπης. — *Pædag.* lib. iii. c. 6.

that is only saying that Baptism, as a sacrament, had an inward grace. Let that rise even to the level of the definition of the Catechism, "A new birth unto righteousness;" and still we are immeasurably short of that state of religious attainment which is the popular conception of Regeneration. Nor let it be forgotten, that in our Catechism it is not affirmed that these benefits are then conveyed, only that they are "signified," or symbolised, in Baptism. The question put is, "What is the inward part or thing signified?" All, therefore, that can be imputed to us is this, "that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him; that, as He died and rose again for us, *so should we*, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness." All that is prospective, the far-off (it may be) fulfilment of the prayer, "Grant that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him." But if any one maintain that we go further than this view of prospective moral change, and hold an immediate moral benefit, all

we reply is this, that we do hope and pray, that along with the outward ordinance there may come some spiritual mercy, making the rite a sacrament; and that in that hope and prayerful expectation we see nothing unscriptural or superstitious. But we utterly repudiate, as a wilful or ignorant misrepresentation of our opinions, the charge, that we hold that a child introduced into the covenant of Christianity passes, as by some cabalistic process, into that fulness of religious life marked by faith, repentance, incipient holiness, ardent desires after God, and elevated affections, which is the ordinary notion of Regeneration. That there is such a spiritual condition, God forbid that we should deny; for then we should deny a sinner's conversion and growth in grace: but that that condition is rightly described by the term Regeneration (which at most is but the very infancy of godliness), that we again deny. The simple truth is, that men of more enthusiastic feeling than of careful expression, of more piety than accuracy, allowed themselves, some centuries since, to misuse a term; and that ignorant men, in their zeal to calumniate the Church, have not made allowance for the verbal extravagance. If they

choose to describe Conversion by the word Regeneration, let them do so ; though their dictionaries and early authorities might teach them better : but all that we contend for is this, that we shall not be held responsible for their perversions. The whole thing is a monstrous anachronism. The language of the nineteenth century has been applied to the documents of the sixteenth ; and because the ritual of our Church is a fixed one, not perpetually changing to accommodation with modern expressions, therefore she is not to be allowed the use of her own vocabulary, or, if allowed it, censured for employing it.

There is another objection sometimes made to the use of the word under discussion. We are reminded that that word is occasionally employed, not singly, but in conjunction with other terms which alter or extend its import — that thus, for example, we have the expression “ spiritual regeneration,” and “ regeneration by the Holy Spirit.” And the inference from this is, that the sense of a mere change of relation cannot, in such instances, be allowed, inasmuch as that word introduces into the whole phrase the recognition of a concomitant spiritual element. In reply



to that, it is merely necessary to say, that the additional words describe only the religious character of the act. It might be regeneration or change, and yet not a religious or spiritual one. A man might pass from one social condition of life to another, and so find himself in new relations, without anything of a religious character attaching itself to the transaction at all. To distinguish between any ordinary change (such as the act of the naturalisation of a foreigner) and this, the adjuncts in question are furnished. But "spiritual regeneration" need no more imply a change in the subject's spirit than a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation," implies the essential holiness or sacredness of those of whom these terms are predicated. And even were it otherwise, and that the words "regeneration by the Spirit" carried the idea of moral benefit, then, on the considerations presented above, we hold the words to be beyond censure. Unless a man is prepared to affirm that no spiritual advantages whatever can accrue from Baptism, that is, that an ordinance of Christ is nothing, under any circumstances, but an act of ecclesiastical registration, he cannot demur to the words, "We yield

“Thee hearty thanks that it hath pleased Thee to “regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit.” The Church may be blamed for asserting so absolutely that which, after all, is but a matter of charitable presumption; but if she have expressed herself strongly, it is on account of the simplicity and strength of her trust. Her Lord has promised the Spirit to those who ask. The Church believes His assurance, and acts upon it. It is, surely, not for her to doubt the truth and faithfulness of her Master. She might express her anticipations after a more qualified fashion, making them hypothetical rather than absolute, matters rather of shadowy hope than of substantial expectation: but that is not the view she desired her children to take of the declarations of a truthful God. “Hath he said, and will he not do it? “Hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?” Acting on the inspired injunction, “Let him “ask in faith, nothing wavering,” she casts herself unhesitatingly on the assurances it hath pleased Him to make, and conveys to her children that it is not for them to doubt when their Lord has spoken explicitly and without reserve.

Another expression in the service is sometimes

impugned, as tinged with superstition. We are asked, In what sense can the prayer be used, "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin?" Does not this hint at a virtue or efficacy communicated to the element itself, impregnating it with a concealed, mysterious quality? The reply to this is found in the adjective "mystical." Were the assertion this, that sin was washed out by water, some colour for the accusation there might be. But the obvious meaning of "mystical" is "symbolical," and the sense of the prayer this, that sin may be removed by God as defilement of the person is removed by water. The phrase, "the mystical Babylon," is understood by every one to imply something quite different from the literal Babylon. Correspondences exist, but correspondences are not identities. The other expression, "Sanctify the water," has been made, in former and modern times, the object of exception. In his "*Scripturæ Anglicanæ*," the otherwise candid and reasonable Bucer speaks disapprovingly of the expression, as likely to create in men's minds "notions of conjurations." It is strange that such an apprehension found a place in a mind which passed unchallenged the

parallel phrase, "Who didst sanctify water by
" the baptism of Christ in the river Jordan."
Assuredly no virtue was held to be communicated
to that, and all that could be meant by the word in
that passage was, that God put holy honour upon
the stream whose waters were poured on the Savi-
our's head. No further sense can be attributed to
the expression in the prayer of consecration. For
surely we have not to learn that the words " sanc-
tify," " hallowed," " holy," are ever used in Scrip-
ture, not in reference to intrinsic virtue, but to that
relative sacredness which accompanies the setting
aside of any thing or any person to holy purpose
or service. The Jews were not censured for call-
ing the Temple " the holy place," or Jerusalem
" the holy city ;" nor were the commands of God,
" Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow," " Take
" up the censers out of the burning, for they are
" hallowed," likely to be misunderstood by them.
Nor are the words of our Lord in reference to
Himself, " for their sakes I sanctify myself," ever
held to imply His assumption of personal holiness.
In all such instances only dedication is accepted
as the meaning of the word, and assuredly, in our
service, nothing beyond that was intended.

We know of no other verbal objections to the service but these three, and may therefore advance to the other class of exceptions, which bears on things done. Already we have adverted to the interrogations put to the child, and replied to by its sureties or sponsors. The form which the objection assumes here is that of the "absurdity" of putting questions "to a creature who cannot understand them, and making him or her respond through the lips of others." But we may surely ask, To whom else is the question to be put? It is no assurance of faith or purpose of life that we require from the sponsors. That which we do require is a declaration that the child is a Christian, and purposes to live as a Christian; and if assurance on these points cannot be given by itself, it must be furnished by some others for it. If this be not done, no alternative remains for the Church but to refuse to admit to her communion those by whom, or for whom, no pledges have been given. Soundness of belief, desire of belonging to the community of the faithful, and purpose of glorifying God by a life of obedience—these, surely, are no needless prerequisites of baptism. They are expected, years afterwards,

from all the baptized, when at Confirmation they ratify and confirm the promises made for them. Meanwhile it is the Church's duty to demand pledges, and the sponsors' duty to see that these pledges shall, as far as on them depends, be converted, by prayer and efforts, into facts.

The objection to the custom of "signing the baptized with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified," is one of which we hear not much in our times. Strongly impugned by the Puritans two centuries past, common sense, or common candour, appears to have quenched the childish scrupulosity of those days. Nevertheless, from time to time, as if to show that the ancient privilege of fault-finding had not been surrendered, we hear whispers of "superstitious usages," and "remnants of Popery." Nay, the finger of admonition is shaken at us, and the "godly precedent" of Hezekiah, when he ground to powder the brazen serpent, held up as worthy of imitation; and ominous mutterings about the golden calves at Dan and Bethel sent abroad to look for echoes. Where the resemblance can be found between a sign drawn on the brow which

leaves no trace behind, and a substantial memorial ever present, and capable of being turned into an object of adoration, I confess myself unable to discover. If there be a necessity for defending anything so simple, and, as we should say, so innocuous, we need not travel for apology further than the Canons of our Church. In them, for the satisfaction of the scruples of "tender consciences," she has gone largely out of her way to explain and vindicate her custom; telling men this, that the early Christians, "so far from being discouraged by the ignominy of " the Cross, rather rejoiced and triumphed in it;" that " Christians ever used it in all their actions;" that " they signed with it their children, when they " were christened, to dedicate them, by this badge, " to His service, whose benefits bestowed on them " in baptism the name of the Cross did represent;" that " though the sign was greatly abused " in the Church of Rome, yet the abuse of a thing " doth not take away the lawful use of it;" that " it is no part of the substance of that Sacrament; " and that the use of the sign of the Cross in baptism, being purged from all Papist superstition " and error, and reduced to the primary institution " of it, comes under those rules of doctrine con-

“cerning things indifferent which are consonant to the Word of God and the judgment of all the “ancient Fathers.” (Canons of 1603, c. 30.) If all this elaborate vindication of a very immaterial usage does not satisfy objectors, it must be because the love of opposition is stronger than the spirit of candour.

Again: there is exception taken to our mode of administering Baptism. The “idolatrous hol-
lowed stone” is an object of scorn, and aspersion with water regarded as a contemptible caricature of the proper method of immersion. Again and again are we reminded that all the baptisms recorded in the New Testament, as that of our Lord in Jordan, and the Ethiopian on his way to Gaza, were after that mode. Now, to this, our first answer is, that our opponents, in their dogmatical zeal, have rashly assumed quite too much. I think it remains to be proved, that persons in the days of the Evangelists and Apostles were baptized by immersion. That they were baptized in rivers and ponds we do not question, but that does not prove that they were immersed. For aught we know to the contrary, they simply stood in the water, which was poured upon their heads. Cer-

tainly we read not that they were dipped. And if any solid argument can be built on the original word employed, it is rather in our favour than against us. After examination of the thirty-two times in which the words βαπτίζω, βάπτω, and βάπτισμα, occur in the New Testament, not one will be found conclusive as to immersion. Most of them are mere statements of the fact of baptism, without any notice as to the manner of its administration. Some are metaphorical; as in our Lord's words, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, "and be baptized with the baptism that I am "baptized with?" Some of them are expressive of simple washing, as "the washing of pots and "cups, &c." Some are figurative, as "buried with "Him in baptism," and therefore proving nothing. Some have reference to the descent of the Spirit, and therefore denote affusion rather than immersion. But in no one instance do we find the word conclusively used for the immersion of the whole person in and under water. We say not, that in those lands and climates, baptism was not administered at the river rather than at the font; but certainly that could not have been the case when, at midnight, the jailor of Philippi and his

household were baptized in a prison ; or in later times, when baptism was administered to the sick, infirm, or dying. Altogether, though we dispute not the propriety of baptism by immersion, yet the state of the case by no means warrants the upholders of that mode only in being opinionative or arrogant on the point. We quarrel not with them for their method, but we affirm that precedents for it are by no means so certain as to justify them in quarrelling with ours. And when it is said, "with ours," it must be recollected that the method enjoined in the Church of England is that of immersion, the permitted and exceptional mode being that of aspersion. Our rubric lays down this rule: "And then he (the minister) shall dip it "in the water discreetly and warily . . . but if they "certify that the child is weak, it shall suffice to "pour water upon it." The reason for this concession can be easily apprehended, for that which might in other climates be harmless, in this might be fatal. Both in admitting infants to baptism, and the permission to baptize them by the less hazardous mode, our Church manifests the charity and consideration of her spirit. In the one case she echoes her Lord's words, "Suffer

“ the little children to come ;” and in the other, she clings to “ mercy rather than sacrifice.”

The last objection we notice is found in the often-uttered taunt, Where are the fruits of your system? Nay, we are told in language unmis- takable, that that system demoralises a nation. Sadly do we admit, that we “ reap not where we “ sow,” that we “ nourish and bring up children, “ and that they rebel against us.” And of what church, or people, or religious community, may not the very same be said? Christ chose twelve, and one was a devil. Paul founded the Churches of Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus; and if we are to infer their state from his admonitions and re- bukes, the superstructure did not correspond with the foundation. God sowed good seed in His field, “ and when the blade was sprung up then “ appeared the tares also.” So hath it ever been, and so to the last will it be. Not till the Lord Himself “ gather out of His kingdom all that “ offend, and them which do iniquity,” shall we see a pure communion. Toil for it, hope for it, pray for it, we must; but expect it hardly. Is- rael basked in privileges and care, such as no other nation ever had, and her history is one of

declension, backslidings, and sin. Not all who were of Israel were Israel. But while admitting so much, we admit not, that for zeal, earnestness, purity, holiness, devotedness to God, and faithfulness even to death, the Church of this land falls behind any. Narrow-minded bigotry may deny it, but large-hearted candour will confess, that very many of the "excellent of the earth" are of her communion; not more distinguished for their love to her than for their love to Christ. Nor let it be forgotten, that until the sponsors of our baptized little ones rise to a sense of their responsibility, and a faithful discharge of their duties, we can hardly expect that our children shall grow up a God-fearing and a Gospel-honouring generation. Our system must be taken as a whole; and pledges made, duties required, and promises fulfilled, are parts of it. All that the Church can do, she does; prays, trusts, hopes, surrounds her little ones with guardian care, and instructs those guardians in their duty. If any man can say, What more can be done for the vineyard than this? let him come forth in the name of God, and tell us how "our lets and "impediments" to success can be removed. But

if sponsors, looking in her trusting face, utter those assurances on the strength of which she consents to receive the little ones brought to her, take them from her hands, give her reason to think that they will be true to their engagements, and then leave the helpless ones like deserted children down upon the door-steps, to meet wintry winds, and biting hunger, and exhausting sickness, as best they may, let not men wonder that, instead of vigour, we have feebleness; instead of strength, decrepitude; instead of honour, disgrace; instead of the bloom of health and the full powers of manhood, the pallid face and the wasted frame, which tell, with but too painful a significance, that early promise has been blighted by cruel or inconsiderate neglect.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SENTIMENTS OF THE REFORMERS.

It has been attempted in the previous chapters to defend our Church and her Service-book against the accusations which have been so freely and recklessly urged against them, and to show that, alike in the language of the Articles, the Catechism, and the Offices, she has done her best to express the sentiments and echo the voice of Inspiration. But, besides explanation of impugned expressions, and comparisons of phrases with kindred ones in the Bible, there is another means by which her meaning may be discovered. The writings of the Reformers may surely be taken as representing their opinions, and so casting light on the import of statements in the Prayer-book; for the men who compiled the one are not likely to have expressed different doctrines in the other.

It is purposed, therefore, to ascertain from the works of some of the principal of our Reformers the views which they held on those points which have been made the subjects of objection. To do this will be the more satisfactory, because we may fairly expect to reach the mind of an author more clearly from the copious statements of his writings, than from a single phrase or sentence in a short and condensed formulary. Brevity and obscurity have frequently been classed together, and considered even as, in some degree, synonymous. It is not unnatural that it should be so, for otherwise we should not have paraphrase employed to elucidate mere expression.

Two things there are which ought to be borne in mind in the conduct of such an inquiry, first, that the Reformers took strong views of the value of the sacraments, oftentimes using terms respecting them likely, from their mystical and metaphorical character, to be greatly misunderstood. And in this respect they are on a level with the early Fathers, who, writing in the language of Oriental exuberance and gorgeous trope, often appear to convey a meaning far different from that which, in reality, they held. It is the same with some of

our English divines. Thus, if we take that passage of Bishop Jewell by itself, detached from and unexplained by other passages,—“Such a change is made in the sacrament of Baptism, through the power of God’s working, the water is turned into blood;” we should be tempted to class him among those who looked for miracles in the sacraments. But when we take it with its contextual passages, we discover that we had been reading but the assertion of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ conveyed in strong and imaginative language:—“We are not washed from our sins by the water; we are not fed to eternal life by the bread and wine, but by the precious blood of our Saviour Christ, that lieth hid in these sacraments. The water itself is nothing, but, by the working of God’s Spirit, the death and merits of our Lord and Saviour Christ are thereby assured unto us.” (Treat. of Sacraments.)

Another point which we must carry in remembrance in collecting the opinions of the Reformers is, that often while they were supposed to be writing of all baptism, inclusive of infant baptism, they are simply writing of the baptism of adults. Strong things are said by them of bap-

tismal efficacy dependent on faith, prayer, and repentance, of all which adults are capable, which they would not have said of infants. It is this that, in part, has drawn on them a suspicion of belief in the mechanical efficacy of baptism, when no thought was further from their minds than it. Regarding baptism as the profession of a convinced and spiritual man, on whose soul a work of permanent grace had passed, and who intended at the font to record his devotion to his Saviour, there was no grace too ample to be expected for such an one. He was as Cornelius, a man who had received the Holy Ghost as well as others; and stood prepared to avouch himself God's "soldier and servant." For such an one great mercies might fairly be expected. But that which would be faith in the one case would become superstition in the other, and of that we shall find the great lights of the sixteenth century to have been wonderfully free.

Now, in turning to their pages for an expression of their views, we shall determine first of all their opinion respecting Sacraments. The Articles of the Church of England were drawn up in 1552, principally by Cranmer and Ridley, although

agreed to by the bishops who met in convocation in that year. This is their doctrine concerning sacraments:—"Sacraments ordained by Christ be
 "not only badges or tokens of men's profession,
 "but rather, they be certain sure witnesses and
 "effectual signs of grace and God's good will to-
 "wards us, by the which He doth work invisibly
 "in us, and doth not only quicken us, but also
 "strengthen and confirm our faith in Him
 "And in such only as worthily receive the same
 "they have a wholesome effect or operation." In
 entire harmony with this is the statement in "King
 "Edward's Catechism"—"That they are certain
 "customary, reverent doings and ceremonies, or-
 "dained by Christ, that by them He might put us in
 "remembrance of His benefits, and that we might
 "declare our profession that we be of the number
 "of them which are partakers of the same bene-
 "fits, and which fasten all their affiance in Him."
 In "Nowell's Catechism," an authority of no mean
 value, inasmuch as it was published under the sanc-
 tion of Convocation in 1562, and recommended
 by Edward the Sixth's letter prefixed to it, we
 have views perfectly harmonious with these;—
 "A sacrament is an outward testifying of God's

“ good will and bountifulness towards us, through
 “ Christ, by a visible sign representing an invisi-
 “ ble grace; by which the promise of God touch-
 “ ing forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation given
 “ through Christ are, as it were, sealed, and the
 “ truth of them the more certainly confirmed in our
 “ hearts . . . We must determine that the out-
 “ ward element hath neither of itself nor in itself
 “ inclosed the force and efficacy of the sacrament,
 “ but that the same wholly floweth from the Spirit
 “ of God, as out of a spring-head, and is by the
 “ divine mysteries which are ordained by the Lord
 “ for this end conveyed unto us.” To these car-
 dinal authorities we shall add only another, for a
 work so important as the “*Reformatio Legum*”
 ought not to be overlooked. There we find these
 benefits attributed to sacraments:—“Great is
 “ their thoughtlessness who so undervalue them,
 “ that they wish them to be considered as mere
 “ naked signs and external tokens only, by which,
 “ as by certain marks, the religion of Christians
 “ may be known from others. By the adminis-
 “ tration of the sacraments faith is conferred by
 “ the power of the Holy Spirit, conscience is
 “ roused, the promises made in Christ of the par-


“don of sin are inwardly applied, and outwardly
“ratified by the sacraments as by a seal.”

Now, let us pause for a few minutes on these four weighty authorities. It will be seen, on the most casual perusal of them, that there is not a trace of the doctrine of any power being inherent, or lying dormant though really in, these ordinances, to be extracted out of them by any power possessed by man. Signs they are and tokens, badges of profession and ratifications of promises; and in the case (obviously only) of believing adults, conferrers of faith and stimulants of conscience. But under these means of grace a superior power is ever recognised; they, the channels—the “Spirit of God the spring-head.” Of nothing appear these writers more jealous than of the interference of any ordinance with the sovereign rights of Deity. Grace through the sacraments they could recognise; necessary grace *in* them they could not. That this distinction was clearly apprehended by them is manifest from the question put, and the answer given, in “Nowell’s Catechism,” the object of which is to prevent the confounding of the instrument with the agent. *Master.* “As thou givest to the

“sacrament the strength and efficacy to seal and
 “confirm God’s promises in our hearts, thou
 “seemest to assign to them the proper offices of
 “the Holy Ghost.” *Scholar.* “To lighten and
 “give bright clearness to men’s minds and
 “souls, and to make their consciences quiet
 “and in security, as they be indeed so ought
 “they to be accounted the proper work of
 “the Holy Ghost alone, and to be imputed
 “to Him; and this praise not to be transferred
 “to any other. But this is no impediment,
 “but that God may give to His mysteries the
 “second place in quieting and establishing our
 “minds and consciences, but yet so that nothing
 “be abated from the virtue of His Spirit.” Clearly,
 therefore, we may conclude, as far as the testimony
 of these four documents reaches, that nothing could
 be further from the minds of the Reformers than
 the idea, that by the mere administration of an
 ordinance, men were necessarily translated from a
 state of sin and danger into one of spiritual union
 with Christ and of ultimate safety. When we
 come to consider the views which they entertained
 respecting the part which man has in the appro-
 priation of blessings promised and privileges

sealed to himself, we shall see more distinctly that no act of the creature was held, for a moment, as capable of encroaching on the independent grace of the Creator.


We shall descend from these authoritative documents to the writings of individual Reformers. There is probably nothing in the history of opinions and of doctrinal changes more wonderful than the clear conception of scriptural truth which these men of the sixteenth century obtained. Educated in the bosom of the Church of Rome, penetrated from their childhood with her dogmas, awed by her authority, and almost haunted by the notion of her infallibility, it is positively marvellous to note how they disembarassed themselves from all these restraints, and stepped forth from the house of ecclesiastical bondage into "the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free." We must limit our quotations to some of the most eminent among them, for it would fill hundreds of pages to cite the dogmatic opinions of all the men of the Reformation period. It will be, or ought to be, enough for our purpose, to call up the evidence of a few of the great lights of the Tudor time;



that is, of the reigns of Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth.

The quotations just given have reference to the subject of Sacraments generally. But it lies nearer to our object to ascertain the opinions of the Reformers on that particular sacrament which is the subject of our inquiry. It must, I think, be admitted, that the views of the Reformers with regard to the efficacy of baptism do not on all points coincide. And in conceding that, we only admit that independence of thought and difference of judgment which may be expected, and ought to be expected, among men who refused to be slaves to the dogmatism of others. The light which opened upon them in the study of the great infallible authority, the Word of God, released them from servile submission to a rigid theological system. Obligated once to think as Rome thought, they now learned to think for themselves. The inevitable consequence of that new liberty was difference of views, for they had learned to "call no man master upon earth." It is, in truth, as hopeless as it is undesirable to expect it should be otherwise. Even in that most dogmatic and intolerant of all churches, the

Church of Rome, perfect unanimity of view has never been effected. The Franciscan and Dominican, the Jesuit and Jansenist, were at avowed warfare with each other. Nay, the simple fact of the existence of an "Index Expurgatorius" and of the Inquisition, is sufficient proof that at all times independence of thought asserted its rights; and that no creed, however authoritatively imposed or however rigidly enforced, was sufficient to trammel the human mind, and reduce all men to Procrustean uniformity. If it were so under the despotism of Rome, most reasonable it is to expect that it should be found under the freedom of Protestantism. Not only do different Protestant communities think differently on the same points, but even the members of the same community find, on comparing notes, that their views do not coincide. In the Church of England the Calvinist and the Arminian, the Sacramentarian and the Evangelical, labour under the same Articles, the same ritual, and the same discipline. If she possessed among her members a Fletcher, whose large tenderness of spirit never allowed him to rise out of Arminianism, she possessed also a Thomas Scott, the avowed and re-




solute champion of Calvinism. In the Baptist communion, if Fuller went the length of the Reformer of Geneva, Hall declared that he never could go beyond preterition. If the Independents, as a body, are Augustinian, the Methodists, as a body, are Arminian. The Church of England can affirm predestination; the Church of Scotland that, and reprobation besides. If such be, and such has ever been the state of human opinion, we are not to wonder that the great Reformers did not see (as we think) eye to eye on the subject of the efficacy of baptism.

These differences appear to arise from two causes, one being the point of view from which they regarded the subject, the other being, apparently, a doubt as to whether the advantages of baptism were immediate, or prospective and contingent. And as these two points appear to me to have much to do with the understanding of the views held by the Reformers, and with the reconciliation of their views, on the main subject, with each other, it may be well to devote a page or two to their consideration.


It appears sufficiently plain that those men did not take precisely the same view respecting

the nature and limits of the true Church. Some there were who predicated that term of all professed believers, and that on the ground of their profession; holding that a man was to be reckoned a child of God until he had so disproved his right to the title as to be "cut off from the congregation." Others predicated it of those only who were God's children in virtue of their election to eternal life, which, according to them, carried with it, naturally and necessarily, all consequent religious advantages. That is the view taken by the Church of Scotland in her "Confession," and the explanation of the strong language used by her in reference to the effects of baptism.* Yet what she affirms of the elect heirs of salvation, she would not think of affirming of all professing Christians indiscriminately. That appears to have been the view of Cranmer and Jewell, and to account for the high estimate they took of baptismal advantages. And so far their scheme is thoroughly consistent with itself. Once regard a man as predestined to eternal life, which is the ultimate consummation of all advantages; and every help, assistance, privilege and advantage,


* See Appendix I.



may be safely affirmed of him. That is only saying, that He who has ordained the end has also ordained the means, and decreed that those means shall be effectual. In such a case, nothing (so to speak) fails. Ordinances which may be "savours of death" to others, are "savours of life" to him; the word, which is a sound to others, is a power to him; discipline, which is useless to others, is salutary to him; the sacraments, which are forms to others, are effects and grace to him. Or, in the words of Hooker, "The means of grace and the grace of means" are not the same thing. We are not now discussing the point, whether those views which so contract the limits of the Church be true or not, for we are only concerned in showing their effect on the view of baptismal efficacy taken by some of the Reformers. Strong hopes may be expressed, and strong declarations made by them as to that efficacy; but the meaning and the value of these declarations become necessarily affected by the question of the persons concerning whom they are made. Supposing the contracted view of the Church to be the right one, we may say what we will of the efficacy of ordinances applied to those



who are predestined to salvation. Conceding the result, there can be no hesitation as to conceding the steps leading to it. And accordingly, if we find pardon, adoption, regeneration, spiritual influences, union with Christ, traced *in such cases* to baptism, we only feel that a predestined heir of glory is under the process of being put in possession of those appliances which are to issue in a pre-decreed result. It is baptismal efficacy, regarded from this point of view, that we encounter in such passages as these of Cranmer and Jewell:—“When we have received the Holy Ghost, He doth kindle in our hearts true love towards God, as St. Paul writeth in the Epistle to the Romans. ‘The love of God,’ saith he, “‘is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.’ And where “the true love of God reigneth, there are God’s “commandments kept, and there beginneth a “certain obedience to His will and pleasure. “Furthermore, the Holy Ghost doth stay the “flesh and the lusts of the same, and helpeth us “to overcome them, that we be not carried away “by them, but may continue in cleanliness and “holiness of life. These be the benefits and




“ the works of the Holy Ghost in us . . . These
 “ new affections and spiritual motions are in the
 “ souls of such as are born again by baptism;
 “ but they are unknown to worldly men, and
 “ such as are not led by the Spirit of God. And
 “ when they that believe and be baptized do con-
 “ tinue in this their faith to the end of their
 “ lives, then God shall raise them up from death
 “ to life, that they may be immortal, and live
 “ everlastingly with Christ.” (Cat. of 1548.) To
 the same purport writes Bishop Jewell :—“ They”
 (the sacraments) “ are not bare signs ; it were
 “ blasphemy so to say. The grace of God doth
 “ always work with His sacraments ; but we are
 “ taught not to seek that grace in the sign, but
 “ to assure ourselves by receiving the sign that it
 “ is given us by the thing signified. We are not
 “ washed from our sins by the water ; we are not
 “ fed to eternal life by the bread and wine, but
 “ by the precious blood of our Saviour Christ,
 “ that lieth hid in these sacraments . . . By the
 “ authorities of thus many ancient Fathers it is
 “ plain, that in the sacrament of baptism, by the
 “ sensible sign of water, the invisible grace of
 “ God is given unto us.” These opinions of two

of our most eminent Reformers undoubtedly attribute large effects to baptism, and speak of those effects as invariable results. But then we are to take such opinions in connexion with others, such as these : — “ This company of men
 “ which believeth the Gospel, although here upon
 “ earth they be severed in sundry places, yet are
 “ they called one holy, catholic, or universal
 “ Church of Christ; that is to say, a multitude,
 “ congregation, or company of Christian people.
 “ For this word ‘ church ’ doth not here betoken
 “ a temple or church builded of timber and stone,
 “ but it signifieth a company of men, lightened
 “ with the Spirit of Christ, which do receive the
 “ Gospel, and come together to hear God’s word,
 “ and to pray. And this Christian Church is a
 “ communion of saints; that is to say, all that be
 “ of this communion or company be holy, and be
 “ one holy body under Christ their head; they be
 “ one holy congregation or assembly.” (Cranmer’s
 Cat. 1548.) “ Cyrillus saith, that as many as
 “ believe in Christ, whether they be far or near,
 “ Jews or Gentiles, free or bond, they are all one
 “ body in Christ Jesus. This thing neither is
 “ denied, nor in any point toucheth the private

“ mass. We confess that Christ, by the sacrament of regeneration, as Chrysostom saith, hath made us flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones; that we are the members, and He is the head. We confess, also, that all the faithful are one body, all endued with one Spirit. And be that distance never so great, yet are we one another’s members. This marvellous conjunction and incorporation is first begun and wrought by faith, as saith Paulinus unto St. Augustine—‘*Per fidem nostram incorporamur*’ ‘*in Christo Jesu Domino nostro*—By faith we are incorporate, or made one body, with Christ ‘Jesus our Lord.’” (Bishop Jewell, Of Private Mass.)

It has been stated above that there was a second cause, which produced such difference of views as we find with regard to baptismal efficacy in the works of the Reformers. It appears to have been held by some of them, that the effects of baptism were not immediate but prospective, and dependent on certain conditions, implied at the time of the administration of the ordinance. And the question regarded from this point of view falls into harmony at once with these pre-requisites

for baptismal advantages—repentance and faith: “both promised by their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are “bound to perform.” According to that view, all that is done in baptism, besides incorporation into the visible Church, is the bestowal of certain advantages of which baptism is the seal, to be claimed and granted at some time future. Of course the claiming of them, in the right sense of that expression, implies repentance and faith; the one the forsaking of sin, the other trust and reliance resting on the promises of God. In that view there is, again, perfect consistency. The covenant need not, as to its benefits, be fulfilled on the spot, or at the moment when it is made, any more than the covenant of God with Abraham necessitated immediate completion. The land was his and his descendants’ by compact and assurance, though not actually and substantially for many generations afterwards. The purchase of an estate is complete, though it may not fall in for a long time to come. And as these baptismal advantages are contingent on certain moral conditions, those conditions being equivalent to con-




version, no language can be too strong for their description. It is but another formula of the Scripture chain of mercies:—"We have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together." To affirm these advantages as coming immediately on an infant were wrong, because, from its state of mental inability, it cannot have either faith or repentance; but to affirm them of a changed, converted, spiritual man is anything but wrong, for they are his on inspired warrant. Clearly, therefore, whenever any of the Reformers predicate these privileges of a baptized person, it is our duty to see whether he is speaking of mercies present or mercies prospective and contingent. Taking into consideration these two different views of the subject, and regarding baptism from these two different points, we shall probably find that the Reformers are at perfect


harmony among themselves. Standing on Cranmer's ground of election, Frith* and Cranmer are agreed; standing on that of advantages prospective and dependent on moral state, Cranmer and Frith are still agreed. If they seem to speak with different tongues, it is because they are regarding the same subject from a different point of observation.

But it is of much more importance for us to observe, that the doctrine of necessary, invariable regeneration by baptism, is not a doctrine of the Reformers. And by that assertion is meant, that it is not their view that baptism always confers regeneration; or that whensoever the ordinance is administered, that result necessarily and always flows. Clearly, those men who held the Church to be the elect spiritual portion of the professedly Christian community, could not have held that opinion; for, according to them, the ordinance took effect only on those who are the predestined heirs of salvation. Of course they never affected to pronounce who, among the many baptized,

* "Our judgment regardeth all faithful and chosen
"that seem to be, but Christ knoweth them that are His,
"and them that shall forsake Him."



these were; only this, that "the Lord knoweth "them that are his." The sacrament was a sacrament only to them. Necessarily such men could not, consistently with their own opinions, have affirmed regeneration universally of the baptized. And again, those men who held the prospective view could not, on their principles, have held that any one was regenerated in the act of baptism. That was a consequence of the ordinance, which was to come into being afterwards when the Spirit of God began to move on the soul, to implant repentance, to beget faith, and to dispose the newly-awakened spirit to claim and appropriate the mercies consigned to him at baptism. In such cases, regeneration, however connected with baptism, did not originate in it. It was among the cluster of blessings then assured, but not then conferred. Neither of these two sets of theologians could have held invariable regeneration through the font. Not that they were prepared to deny that at baptism it might not be given, for in the former case we see it was held to be given, and in the latter it might (as to its germ and commencement) have been implanted, though allowed to lie dormant for a season. In fact,



though not prepared to make baptism *always* the channel of regeneration, they were prepared to allow it to be so, whensoever God was pleased to employ it for that purpose; and though not prepared to concede baptism to be the only channel of regeneration, they were ready to grant it to be among the channels. But on one point they seem all to have been harmonious—that the administration of baptism was but an instrument, not an agent: that no mysterious virtue lay in the water; and that regeneration, if conveyed and when conveyed, was not a mechanical operation, but the result of God's free mercy, using, as He pleased and when He pleased, an ordinance as a channel of His grace.


From this view of the opinions of the Reformation, derived from these almost official documents, we may pass to the investigation of those held by individuals, allowing Ridley and Bucer to speak on the subject of sacramental efficacy for their contemporaries and brother-reformers:—
 “ True it is, every sacrament hath grace annexed
 “ to it instrumentally. But there are divers
 “ understandings of that word *habet*, ‘hath;’ for
 “ the sacrament hath not grace included in it;

“ but to those that receive it well it is turned to
 “ grace. After that manner the water in bap-
 “ tism hath grace promised, and by that grace
 “ the Holy Ghost is given; not that grace is
 “ included in water, but that grace cometh by
 “ water This sacrament” (the Lord’s Sup-
 “ per) “ hath a promise of grace made to them who
 “ receive it worthily, because grace is given by it,
 “ as by an instrument; not that Christ hath trans-
 “ fused grace into the bread and wine,” &c.
 (Bp. Ridley: Disputation at Oxford.)

In precisely the same strain writes Bucer,
 another great Reformation authority: — “ The
 “ faithful and godly pastor must teach that the
 “ sacraments of themselves do not confer and give
 “ grace, neither bring salvation of their own vir-
 “ tue, power, and dignity (as the Papists teach);
 “ but that they are testimonies, signs and seals,
 “ of God’s grace, favour, and mercy towards us,
 “ and do lively represent and set forth to us the
 “ great clemency and singular goodness of God
 “ towards all such as repent, and lay hand by
 “ strong faith on His most merciful promises,
 “ made in the death of His Son Christ; and, in
 “ fine, that the sacraments are the very same to

“ the believing Christian that the word of God is :
 “ as St. Austin saith, ‘ A sacrament is a visible
 “ ‘ word.’ For look, what the word of God is to
 “ the ear of a Christian, the very same is the
 “ sacrament to the eye of a Christian, and the
 “ Holy Ghost worketh mightily by them both.
 “ So that, as the word is not preached in vain,
 “ but bringeth forth fruit in them that are ap-
 “ pointed unto everlasting life, even so it is with
 “ the sacraments.” (Pref. to “ Good News.”)


These quotations sufficiently represent the views held by some of the principal of the Reformers on the subject of sacraments generally. It is the more immediate point of our inquiry to determine their views on that of the efficacy of baptism. And however divergent may have been their estimates on minor points, on these all-important ones we shall, as we think, find them all agreed,—that regeneration did not invariably and necessarily accompany baptism ; that regeneration may be attributed to other ordinances besides baptism ; and that, whatever benefit flowed from that particular ordinance was derived from no force or mysterious virtue lodged in the element after consecration, but from the grace of God em-




ploying it as a means according to His own pleasure.

Now, on the first of these points it is hardly necessary to dwell. The observations already made show that many of the Reformers held the view of prospective advantages; that is, of advantages promised, though not conferred, in baptism, and bestowed sometime afterwards, on the condition of repentance and faith being existent. With that view comes necessarily the conclusion, that the sacrament was regarded rather as a seal than a channel, and therefore that regeneration was a matter of expectation rather than of fruition. That the Reformers thought so, appears clear from these quotations.

The "Catechism," and "Sermon on Baptism," by Cranmer, are often referred to, to prove that that eminent Reformer held high views of baptismal efficacy. And there can be no question that he did so; but also there can be but little question that the case chiefly before his mind was that of the baptism of adults, in whom the Spirit of God had worked previously to the reception of the ordinance, and made them qualified for and entitled to it. In such a case it is no wonder that




we hear of holy affections, and devout aspirations, and vigorous faith, being attendant on the ordinance, for that is but to say that a man already regenerated is advanced in the divine life by ordinances of God's own appointment. Thus, in his "Catechism," Cranmer writes,—“These be the
 “benefits and works of the Holy Spirit in us.
 “And to the intent you may the more easily bear
 “them away, I will (as briefly as I can) repeat
 “them again unto you. First of all, the Holy
 “Ghost provoketh and stirreth up men to preach
 “God's word. Then He moveth men's hearts to
 “faith, and calleth them to baptism; and then
 “by faith and baptism He worketh so, that He
 “maketh us new men again.” And in his “Ser-
 “mon on Baptism:”—“When a man is baptized
 “it is as much as to say, as he doth then confess,
 “that he is a sinner, and that he is under the
 “rule and governance of sin, so that of himself
 “he cannot be good or righteous. And then he
 “cometh to baptism, and then seeketh for help
 “and remedy,” &c. And again:—“Before we
 “were baptized, it is evident that we were sin-
 “ners, and he that is a sinner can have no peace
 “or quietness of conscience before he come to



“ Christ, so much he feareth God’s wrath and
 “ everlasting damnation. But after that our sins
 “ in baptism be forgiven us, and we believe the
 “ promises of God, and so by our faith be justi-
 “ fied, then our consciences be quieted and we be
 “ glad and merry, trusting assuredly that God is
 “ no more angry with us for our former offences,
 “ and that we shall not be damned for the same.
 “ And this is a marvellous alteration and re-
 “ newing of the inward man, the which could be
 “ wrought by the power of no creature, but by
 “ God alone.” In this Sermon passages akin to
 these occur in every page; but it is evident at
 a glance that they relate not to new powers ne-
 cessarily implanted by baptism in an infant, but
 to strengthening and increase of that faith an
 holiness through the ordinance, which had without
 it, and previously to it, been conveyed. And if
 so, regeneration is not linked to baptism. In
 perfect harmony with this wrote Frith:—“ The
 “ outward sign doth neither give us the Spirit of
 “ God, neither yet grace; that is, the favour of
 “ God. For if, through the washing in the water,
 “ the Spirit of grace were given, then should it
 “ follow, that whoever was baptized in water

“ should receive this precious gift: but that is not
“ so; wherefore I must needs conclude that this
“ outward sign, by any power or influence that it
“ hath, bringeth not the Spirit or power of God.
“ Moreover, if the Spirit of God and His grace
“ were bound to the sacraments, then, when the
“ sacraments were ministered, there must the
“ Spirit of grace wait on us; and where they were
“ not ministered should be neither Spirit nor
“ grace. But that is false; for Cornelius and
“ his household received the Holy Ghost before
“ they were baptized. Here may we see that as
“ the Spirit of God lighteth where He will, nei-
“ ther is He bound to anything.” So Bishop
Hooper writes:—“ Such as are baptized must
“ remember that repentance and faith precede
“ this external sign, and in Christ the purgation
“ was inwardly obtained before the external sign
“ was given. So that there be two kinds of bap-
“ tism, and both necessary: the one interior,
“ which is the cleansing of the heart — the draw-
“ ing of the Father, the operation of the Holy
“ Ghost; and this baptism is in man when he
“ believes and trusteth that Christ is the only
“ actor of his salvation.” There is no doubt that



this writer held, that in baptism infants received high benefits; but, on the other hand, there is no doubt that he held that those benefits were never so dependent on baptism as that the person who wanted the one was therefore deprived of the other. In other words, that regeneration was not limited to baptism. Thus, in other passages we read:—"I believe that this baptism by water
 "is not so necessary to salvation that one may
 "not be saved without it in case of necessity, but
 "that the sons are saved in the faith of their
 "parents, as well as if they were baptized. But
 "this only do I understand of the children of
 "the faithful, unto whom the promises of God
 "do appertain, and not of the infidels and
 "reprobates." (Confession of Christian Faith.) And if any doubt remain in any person's mind as to whether this eminent Reformer held that the sign and the signified went invariably together, it ought to be removed by this his criticism on the free use of words employed by the ancient Fathers. "They thought it best to
 "name the sacrament by the name of the thing
 "that was represented by the sacrament. Yet in
 "many places of their writings they so interpret

“ themselves, that no man, except he be wilfully
 “ blind, can say but they understood the sacra-
 “ ments to signify, and not to be the things signi-
 “ fied; to confirm, and not to exhibit grace; to
 “ help, and not to give faith; to seal, and not to
 “ win the promises of God; to show what we be
 “ before the use of them, and not to make us the
 “ thing we declare to be after them; to show we
 “ are Christ’s; to show we be in grace, and not by
 “ them to be received into grace; to show we be
 “ saved, and not to be saved by them; to show
 “ we are regenerated, and not to be regenerated
 “ by them.” Clearly, it could not have been the
 judgment of Bishop Hooper that baptism and
 regeneration were indissolubly connected. And
 in entire agreement with those authors speaks
 another, of a somewhat later age. In his treatise
 of the Sacraments Jewell writes:—“ According
 “ to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of
 “ the new birth and the renewing of the Holy
 “ Ghost. For this cause baptism is called salva-
 “ tion, life, regeneration, the forgiveness of sins,
 “ the power of God to resurrection, the image
 “ and pledge of resurrection, and the weed of
 “ immortality. And yet, are not these things

“wrought by the water, for then what need had
 “we of Christ, what good did His Passion, what
 “doth the Holy Ghost work in our hearts, what
 “power or force is left to the word of God? . . .
 “It is the covenant, and promise, and mercy of
 “God, which clotheth with immortality, assureth
 “our resurrection, by which we receive regene-
 “ration, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.
 “His word declareth His love towards us, and
 “that word is sealed and made good by baptism.
 “Our faith which are baptized, and our conti-
 “nuance in the faith which we have made, esta-
 “blisheth in us this grace which we receive . . .
 “Not the water, but the blood of Christ recon-
 “cileth us unto God, strengtheneth our con-
 “science, and worketh our redemption. We
 “must seek salvation in Christ alone, and not in
 “any outward thing.” (Treatise of the Sacra-
 ments.) And again:—“We have need of God’s
 “grace; these corruptible elements need it not.
 “Without faith of our part Sacraments be not only
 “unprofitable to us, but also hurtful.” (Defence
 of the Apology.) To these we shall add but
 one more, from Becon, the editor of the Homilies.
 “I have heard say that the sacraments of the Old

" Law were only signs and tokens of God's grace
 " and favour to the Jews, but that the sacraments
 " of the New Testament are not only signs and
 " tokens and seals of God's grace, but that they
 " also give grace to such as receive them. This
 " doctrine is contrary to the word of God . . .
 " The sacraments of themselves are nothing else
 " than as Paul terms them, seals of righteousness
 " . . . Baptism brought not grace, but testifies
 " unto the congregation that he which is baptized
 " hath already received grace and the Spirit of
 " God." These views of Becon are, as might have
 been expected, in perfect harmony with the senti-
 ments of the Homilies. " Writing to Boniface
 " of the baptism of infants, St. Augustine saith,
 " " Sacraments do for the most part receive the
 " " names of the self-same things they signify."
 (Hom. of Common Prayer.)

It seems unnecessary to accumulate quotations on this point. Those cited sufficiently represent the voice of the Reformation, and show that nothing was further from the minds of its promoters than the notion that the inward grace signified was so necessarily involved in the outward sign, as that baptism always conveyed grace-

neration. That it did so always in the case of the elect, no doubt was held by some; that it was bestowed mercifully whenever God pleased, was held by others. That it was foreshadowed, promised, and sealed in baptism, to be claimed in due time by the repentant and faithful, was held by others. But none of them, as far as we can interpret their writings, held the invariable and indissoluble union of baptism and regeneration. And all of these views we can honestly admit, without unduly elevating sacraments or superstitiously attaching to them an extravagant value.


We reach the same conclusion if we can show that the Reformers admitted other instruments besides baptism to be channels of regeneration. If such conveyed it, then, either a man was regenerated twice; or else, when regenerated by them, was not regenerated by baptism. A very few quotations will suffice to show that this was also a Reformation principle.

Let us turn, first, to Bishop Latimer:—"I would have you come to sermons; it is declared in many more places of Scripture how necessary preaching is, as thus,—'The preaching of the Gospel is the power of God to every man that

“ ‘doth believe.’ He means, God’s word opened :
 “ it is the instrument, and a thing whereby we
 “ are saved. Beware, beware ye diminish not this
 “ office, for if ye do, ye decay God’s power to all
 “ that do believe. Christ saith, consonant to the
 “ same, ‘Except a man be born again from above
 “ ‘he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Ye must
 “ have a regeneration; and what is this regene-
 “ ration? It is not to be christened in water
 “ and nothing else. How is it to be expounded,
 “ then? St. Peter showeth that one place of
 “ Scripture declareth another. ‘We be born
 “ ‘again,’ saith Peter. How? Not by a mortal
 “ seed, but by an immortal. What is this im-
 “ mortal seed? By the word of the living God,
 “ by the word of God preached and opened . . .
 “ Thus cometh in our new birth. Here you may
 “ see how necessary this office is to our salvation.”
 (Sermon before Edward VI.) And again :—
 “ Paul saith, ‘The Gospel is the power of God
 “ ‘unto salvation.’ This is a great commendation
 “ of this office of preaching, therefore we ought
 “ not to despise it, or little regard it; for it is
 “ God’s instrument whereby He worketh faith in
 “ our hearts. Our Saviour saith to Nicodeme,

“ ‘Except a man be born again he cannot see
 “ ‘the kingdom of God.’ But how cometh this
 “ regeneration? By hearing and believing of the
 “ word of God, for so saith Peter: ‘We are born
 “ ‘anew, not of mortal seed, but of immortal, by
 “ ‘the word of God.’” In the same tone speaks
 Bishop Hooper:—“Although baptism is a sacra-
 “ ment to be received, and honourably used
 “ of all men, yet it sanctifies no man. And
 “ such as attribute remission of sins unto the
 “ external sign do offend. John preached peni-
 “ tence in the desert, and remission of sin in
 “ Christ. Such as confess their faults he has
 “ marked, and declared them to be of Christ’s
 “ Church. So that external baptism was but an
 “ inauguration or external consecration of those
 “ that first believed, and were cleansed of their
 “ sin, as he declares himself in the same place,
 “ ‘I baptize with water;’ as though he said, My
 “ baptism makes no man the better; inwardly it
 “ changes no man: but I call and preach to the
 “ outward ear, I exhort unto repentance. And
 “ such as say they do repent, and would change
 “ their old sinful life, I wash with water. He
 “ that inwardly cleanses is stronger than I. His

“ grace alone purifies the soul. I baptize into
 “ repentance; that is to say, into a new life. This
 “ new life comes not till such time as Christ is
 “ known and received. Now to put on Christ is
 “ to live a new life. Such as are baptized must
 “ remember that repentance and faith precede
 “ this external sign, and in Christ the purgation
 “ was inwardly obtained before the external sign
 “ was given.” (Declar. of Christ.) We find
 the same view expressed by Hooper in that
 striking document, his “ Confession of Christian
 “ Faith:”—“ I believe that this Holy Spirit, dwell-
 “ ing in us through His grace and virtue, doth
 “ regenerate us into a newness and change of
 “ living, mortifying in us all that is of us, and of
 “ the old man, and of the flesh, and of the world,
 “ and quickening all that is His in us.” We
 shall add to these a single quotation from the
 works of Tindal:—“ Now is the true believer
 “ heir of God by Christ’s deservings; yea, in
 “ Christ was predestinated and ordained unto
 “ eternal life before the world began. And when
 “ the Gospel is preached unto us we believe
 “ the mercy of God; and in believing we receive
 “ that Spirit of God which is the earnest of



" eternal life . . . This longing and consent of
 " the heart unto the law of God is the working
 " of the Spirit, which God has poured into their
 " hearts, in earnest that thou mightest be sure
 " that God will fulfil all His promises that He
 " hath made thee. It is also the seal and mark
 " which God putteth on all men that He chooseth
 " unto everlasting life." (Parable of Wicked
 Mammon.) With one quotation from Cran-
 mer we may close our proofs on this point:—
 " If we will be the heirs of God and everlasting
 " life we must be born again, and sanctified or
 " made holy, as appertaineth to the children of
 " the most holy God. Now this new birth, or
 " sanctification, the Holy Ghost worketh in us,
 " and therefore He is called the Holy Ghost,
 " because everything that is sanctified or hal-
 " lowed is sanctified or made holy by Him . . .
 " Wherefore, good children, mark well this les-
 " son, that when ye be demanded, How under-
 " stand ye the third part of the Creed? ye may
 " answer thus,—I believe that neither by man's
 " strength, power, nor wisdom, neither by mine
 " own endeavour, nor compass of my own reason,
 " I am able to believe in Jesus Christ, or come

“unto Him. But the Holy Ghost did call me
 “by the word of the Gospel, and with the gifts of
 “His grace; He hath hitherto endowed me and
 “hallowed me, and in the true faith hath hitherto
 “preserved and confirmed me God also
 “openeth our hearts, that we may listen and give
 “credit to His holy preachers, as Christ himself
 “saith, ‘Ye have not first chosen me, but I have
 “‘chosen you.’ Now, forasmuch as God hath
 “thus called us to the faith, and by faith hath
 “given us light in our hearts, that we may for-
 “sake all strange gods, and believe only on Him,
 “it is our part to lead our life in godliness; to
 “desire God, with hearty and fervent prayers,
 “that it may please Him to make perfect that
 “thing which He hath begun in us . . . There-
 “fore God must begin and call us by His word,
 “and put faith in our hearts, or else we should
 “never ask anything of Him.” (Cranmer’s Cate-
 chism.)


These quotations will sufficiently show the
 sentiments of the Reformers on the point; for, by
 allowing regeneration to take place in later life
 when reflection and emotions were faculties of the
 individual, and in tracing up the openings of the

new life to the power of the word, the preaching of the Gospel, and the secret action of the Spirit, they clearly affirm baptism to be not the only instrument of regeneration. They all harmonise with the well-known declaration of Hooker some time after, —“ Sacraments contain in themselves no vital
 “ force or efficacy; they are not physical but moral
 “ instruments of salvation—duties of worship,
 “ which, unless we perform as the Author of grace
 “ requireth, they are unprofitable. For all re-
 “ ceive not the grace of God which receive the
 “ sacrament of His grace;”—a declaration which admits that the administration might be where the efficacy is not: just as the former quotations show, that although grace was to be found in the ordinances, it was not so monopolised by ordinances as that other means of grace should not, when God pleased, effect the same result. On the whole, if the term Baptismal Regeneration mean, that all who are baptized are therefore regenerated, and that Regeneration means the invariable implantation of new life in the soul, that doctrine was not held by the Reformers.

We have now, in conclusion, only to notice our last point, that the Reformers had no sympathy


whatever with the doctrine of any mysterious virtue being conveyed into the elements of the sacraments. Relatively holy they were prepared to allow them to be, because of acts of consecration which devoted them to holy uses. But of their intrinsic efficacy they had no belief. As to baptism, they knew nothing of the superstition condemned in the "*Reformatio Legum*," which conceived "that grace, and all the other benefits proceeding from it, actually swim in the baptismal font;" and as to the Supper of the Lord, they stood aloof equally from Lutheran and Tridentine views as to changes effected in the substances of the bread and wine, by virtue of the prayer of the consecration. The document just referred to, one of the earliest and most authoritative of the Reformation standards, speaks with unmistakable distinctness on this point:—

"They (the persons condemned) will have it, that an entire regeneration is owing to that sacred well which is the object of our senses. But the salvation of souls, the renewing of the Spirit, and the privileges of adoption as the sons of God, proceed from the divine mercy abounding in us through Christ, as well as from the promises



“ contained in the Holy Scriptures. Their scrupulous superstition, too, appears impious, who so tie the grace of God and the Holy Spirit to the sacramental elements, as plainly to affirm that no infant, even of Christian parents, can attain eternal life who is taken away by death before he can be brought to baptism; which things we esteem to be far otherwise. For salvation is only withheld from those who despise the sacred laver of baptism, or turn from it with pride and contumacy.” (Chap. xviii.) With the same clear discrimination between channel and power write individual Reformers. Thus Cranmer distinguishes:—“ Peradventure some will say, ‘How can water work so great things?’ To whom I answer, ‘That it is not the water that doth these things, but the almighty word of God’ (‘which is knit and joined to the water), and ‘faith, which receiveth God’s word and promise.’” (Sermon on Baptism.) So Frith:—“ By this we may perceive how gross their ignorance is, which, without discretion, condemn the infants that depart out of the world, not baptized in the material water. For if that water give no grace, as I have sufficiently proved, why should they

“condemn more before that washing than after?” (Declaration of Baptism.) So Hooper:—“Like-
 “wise no man should condemn or neglect this
 “exterior sign, for the commandment’s sake;
 “though it have no power to cleanse from sin, yet
 “it confirms the cleansing from sin; and the act
 “itself pleases God, because the receivers there-
 “of obey the will of His commandment.” (De-
 claration of Christ.) So Jewell:—“The water
 “wherein we are baptized doth not cleanse the
 “soul, but ‘the blood of Jesus Christ his Son
 “‘doth cleanse us from all sin.’ We must seek
 “salvation in Christ alone, and not in any out-
 “ward thing.” (Tract of the Sacrament.) And,
 “The water itself is nothing; but, by the working
 “of God’s Spirit, the death and merits of our
 “Lord and Saviour Christ are thereby assured
 “unto us.” So Hooker writes:—“The real
 “presence of Christ’s most blessed body and
 “blood is not, therefore, to be sought for in
 “the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of
 “the sacrament. I see not which way it should
 “be gathered, by the word of Christ, when or
 “where the bread is His body and the cup His



“ blood, but only in the very heart and soul of
 “ him which receiveth them Of sacraments,
 “ the very same is true which Solomon’s wis-
 “ dom observeth in the brazen serpent,—‘ He
 “ ‘that turned towards it was not healed by
 “ ‘the thing he saw, but by thee, O Saviour of
 “ ‘all.’”

If it were necessary to carry our quotations further, many could be produced from the writings of the great divines of a half-century later than the times of Cranmer, Latimer, and Hooper, as well as from the examination of the Martyrs on the subject of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. For there is nothing said by them detaching Christ from the elements in the supper, placing Him in the heart of the faithful receiver, and making these elements mere signs and channels of grace, which might not be applied to the point before us. All would concur in proving that those great men, to whose clear judgments, strong faith, and unfaltering intrepidity we owe the Reformation, understood distinctly the value, and refused to recognise the undue value of ordinances. All would combine

in showing, that while they expected from baptism great privileges, both as to incorporation into the Church and spiritual benefits, they never so far exalted the Church as to make it eclipse the Saviour, or so far dignified an ordinance as to mistake an instrument for an agent.

APPENDIX.

A.—Page 5.

IN the "Catechism of the Council of Trent" it is stated, that "of the many definitions, each of them sufficiently appropriate, which may serve to explain the nature of a sacrament, there is none more comprehensive, none more perspicuous, than that of St. Augustin; a definition which has since been adopted by all scholastic writers. 'A sacrament,' says he, 'is a sign of a sacred thing;' or, in other words of the same import, 'a sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace, instituted for our justification.'" And in "The Abridgment of Christian Doctrine," a sacrament is defined to be "a visible sign of invisible grace, clearly instituted by Christ for our sanctification." Yet, in the same document, when the question is asked respecting the time of institution of the so-called sacrament of Confirmation, the answer is, "The time is not certain, but divines hold that it was most probably instituted at Christ's last supper, or between His resurrection and ascension." And with regard to Matrimony, also held a sacrament by the Church of Rome,

the reply to the question, "When was it made a sacrament of the new law?" is, "When and where Christ instituted this sacrament is uncertain. Some think it done, or at least insinuated, at the wedding of Cana, &c." So with respect to Extreme Unction: "The time (when Christ did institute it) is uncertain: some think it was instituted at the last supper; others, that it was done betwixt the resurrection and ascension." In other words, Rome asserts that Divine institution is necessary to the essence of sacraments; and yet, with respect to these ordinances which she has elevated to the dignity of sacraments, can neither determine when those institutions took place, nor point to any Divine authority on which they stand.

B.—Page 15.

This view of the use of sacraments as assistants to the weakness of faith is well put by Archbishop Sandys, in his sermon on 2 Cor. vi. 1:—"In His word, God hath promised and certified us of remission of sins in His death; of righteousness in His merits; of life in His resurrection; and in His ascension, of heavenly and everlasting glory. This promise is taken hold of by faith, which is the instrument of our salvation; but, because our faith is weak and staggering, through the frailty of our mortal flesh, He will give us the visible sacrament as a seal and sure pledge of His irrevocable promise—for the more assurance and confirmation of

our feeble faith. If a prince gave out his letters-patent of a gift, so long as the seal is not put the gift is not fully ratified, and the party to whom it is given thinketh not himself sufficiently assured of it. God's gift, without sealing, is sure; as He himself is all one without changing: yet, to bear with our infirmity, and to make us more secure of His promise, to His writing and bond has added these outward signs and seals to establish our faith, and to certify us that His promise is most certain."

C.—Page 41.

"For when we know how Christ in general hath said that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven,' which kingdom is the inheritance of God's elect; and do, withal, behold how His providence hath called them into the first beginnings of eternal life, and presented them at the well-spring of new birth, wherein original sin is purged; besides which sin, there is no hindrance of their salvation known unto us;—hard it were that, having so many fair inducements whereupon to ground, we should not be thought to utter, at the least, a trust as probable and allowable in terming any such particular infant an elect babe, as in presuming the like of others, whose safety, nevertheless, we are not absolutely able to warrant."—HOOKER, *Ecc. Pol.* book v.

D.—Page 69.

“ Here a ready reason may be given why there is so little mention of baptizing infants in the New Testament,—that there is neither plain precept nor example for it, as some ordinarily plead. The reason is, because there needed no such mention ; baptizing of infants having been as ordinarily used in the Church of the Jews as ever it hath been in the Christian Church. It was enough to mention that Christ established baptism for an ordinance under the Gospel ; and then who should be baptized was well enough known by the use of this ordinance of old. Therefore it is good plea, ‘ Because there is no clause forbidding of the baptism of infants in the Gospel, *ergo*, they are to be baptized : for that, having been in common use among the Jews that infants should be baptized as well as men and women, our Saviour would have given some special prohibition if He intended that they should have been excluded. So that silence in this case doth necessarily conclude approbation to have the practice continued which had been used of old before.’—LIGHTFOOT, *Harmony of the New Testament* : Luke iii.

“ Of the antiquity and long and ancient use of baptism under the Law, we have first this testimony of Maimonides, the great registrar of the Jews’ customs and antiquities, in his treatise ‘ Issure Biah,’ c. 12 :—‘ By these things Israel entered into covenant, by circumcision, sacrifice, and baptism. . . . And so in after

times, when a heathen will enter into the covenant, and be gathered and joined under the wings of the Divine Majesty, and take upon him the yoke of the Law, circumcision, and baptism, and a free-will offering is required. . . . A stranger that is circumcised and not baptized, or that is baptized and not circumcised, is not a proselyte till he be both circumcised and baptized."

Rabbi Jehoshua saith, "He that is baptized and not circumcised, behold, he is a proselyte."


"It is necessary" (saith Maimonides again) "that he be baptized before a triumvirate, or before a consistory of three. If a man come and say, 'I was proselyted in such a consistory, and they baptized me,' he is not to be trusted to come into the congregation till he bring witness."

"In the Talmud they have these words,— 'Rabbi Hona saith, a little one they baptized by the appointment of the consistory.' The Hebrew gloss upon that plea saith, 'If he have not a father, and his mother bring him to be proselyted, they baptize him; because there be no proselyte without circumcision and baptism. And Maimonides, in the treatise 'Abadim,' hath this saying,— 'An Israelite that takes a little heathen, or that finds a heathen infant, and baptizeth him into the name of a proselyte, behold, he is a proselyte.' " — *LIGHTFOOT, Harm. Evang.* in John, i. 28.

E.—Page 90.

“ The fathers made a league with God, not only for themselves, but also for their posterity ; as God again, for His part, promised them that He would be the God, not only of them, but also of their seed and posterity ; wherefore it be lawful for them to circumcise their children, being yet infants. And, in like manner, it is lawful for us to baptize our little ones, being yet infants, forasmuch also as they are comprehended in the league. For they which have now the thing itself there is nothing that can let but that they may receive the sign ; it is mercifully written in Deut. xxix. that the league was made not only with them which were present, but also with them which were absent, and not yet born.” — PETER MARTYR *on Judges*.

The views of Beza are in strict accordance with this. “ There is a special regard to be had to the children of the faithful. For although they have not faith in effect, such as those that be of age, yet so it is that they have the seed and the spring in virtue of the promise, which was received and apprehended by the elders. For God promised not as only to be our God, if we believe in Him, but also that He will be the God of our offspring and seed ; yea, unto a thousand degrees : that is, to the last end. Therefore said St. Paul that the children of the faithful be sanctified from their mothers' wombs. By what right or title, then, do they refuse to give them the mark and ratification of that thing which they have



and possess already? . . . According to the same (the promise) we baptize the young children of the faithful, as they have used, and from the Apostles' time, in the Church of God; and we doubt not that God, by this mark (joined with the prayers of the Church, which is their assistant) doth seal the adoption and election in those whom He hath predestinate eternally, whether they die before they come to age of discretion, or whether they live to bring forth the fruits of their faith in due time, and according to the means which God has ordained." — BEZA, *Loc. Com.*

F.—Page 91.

"At ne quis existimet ideo parvulos ad baptismum afferri oportere quia sicut peccatores non sunt, ita nec justi sunt, quomodo ergo quidam meritum hujus ætatis a Domino laudatum esse commemorat, ubi ait, Sinite parvulos venire ad me, quoniam," &c. — AUG. *De Pecc. Rem.* c. i.

"Huic dicto, inter cetera innititur mos etiam infantes Baptismo tingendi. Quem Augustini temporibus per omnes ecclesias fuisse receptum hoc ipso satis constat, quòd Pelagiani cum eo argumento premerentur negare id ipsum nunquamausi fuerunt." "Nolite eos prohibere." — *Poli Syn. in Mat.* xix.

"But some will object, What resemblance does this embrace of Christ's bear to baptism, for He is not said to have baptized them, but to have received them

. . . But it is not to be passed over as a thing of little importance that Christ commanded infants to be brought to Him, and added, as a reason for this command, 'of such is the kingdom.' If it be reasonable for infants to be brought to Christ, why is it not allowable to admit them to baptism?" &c.—CALVIN, *Inst.* b. iv. c. 16.

"Why are they employed who cannot covenant? There is no proof that God had ever a church on earth, in any age, of which infants were not members. Christ rebuked His disciples who kept some from Him, 'for of such is the kingdom of God!'"—BAXTER, *Cat.* ii. 13.

G.—Page 107.

The following quotations will show, at one view, how strictly harmonious the Churches of the Reformation were on the point of the right of infants to baptism; and, by contrast, the position of any community, as regards catholicity, which repudiates that right:—

"We condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that young infants, born of faithful persons, are to be baptized; for, according to the doctrines of the Gospel, 'theirs is the kingdom of God.' And they are written in the covenant of God; and why, then, should not this sign of the covenant be given them?"—*Second Helvetic Confession.*

"Baptism, according to the institution of our Lord, is the font of Regeneration, the which the Lord doth

give to His chosen a visible sign, by the ministry of the Church, in such sort as He has declared before. In which holy font we do, therefore, dip our infants, because that it is not lawful for us to reject them from the company of the people of God, &c." — *First Helvetic Confession*.

"Although baptism in the primitive Church was, for the most part, ministered to such as were well grown and of discretion, after a confession of faith made by them, according to Christ's commandment, yet this is taught, that young children also, who are reckoned in the number of God's people in like sort, are by this ministry to be benefited towards the attainment of salvation, that they may likewise be consecrated and dedicated to Christ, according to His commandment, 'Suffer ye the little ones to come to me, and forbid them not; for unto such belongeth the kingdom of God.' " — *Confession of Bohemia*.

"Furthermore, although baptism be a sacrament of faith and repentance, yet seeing that God doth, together with the parents, account their posterity also to be of the Church; we affirm that infants, being born of holy parents, are by the authority of Christ to be baptized." — *Confession of France*.

"Neither doth baptism profit us only at that moment when the water resteth upon us, and when we are sprinkled with it, but it is available throughout the whole time of our life. Therefore, here we do detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not only content with one only baptism, and that once received, but do

also condemn the baptism of infants, yea of them who be born of faithful parents: but we, by the same reason, do believe that they ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, for the which in times past the infants among the Israelites were circumcised; that is, by reason of the same promises made unto our infants that were made unto others."—*Confession of Belgia.*

"And that young infants are to be baptized, and that they, being by baptism commended unto God, are received into God's family, and are made the sons of God, as Christ witnesseth, speaking of little children in the Church (Matt. xviii.), 'It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.'"—*Confession of Augsburg.*

"We do also baptize infants, because it is most certain that the promise of grace doth pertain also to infants, and to them only who are engrafted into the Church, because that of them it is said, 'Suffer little ones to come unto me, because that unto such appertaineth the kingdom of heaven.'"—*Confession of Saxony.*

"We acknowledge that baptism is to be administered as well to infants as to them that are grown of full age, and that it is to be used in the Church even to the end of the world . . . according to Christ's institution."—*Confession of Wirtemberg.*

"And seeing that baptism is a sacrament of that covenant which God hath made with them that are His,

that He will be their God and the God of their seed; therefore our preachers do teach that it is to be given to infants also, as well as that in times past under Moses they were circumcised; for we are indeed the children of Abraham, and therefore that promise, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed,' doth no less pertain unto us than it did to the ancient people."— *Confession of Sueveland*.

H.—Page 127.

It appears from Neal's statement of the objections of the Puritans to the exclusion of parents from the sponsorial office, that the true position of the parents was quite misunderstood by the objectors. "When the education of children is by the laws of God and nature entrusted to parents, who are bound to form them to virtue and piety, they apprehended it very unjustifiable to release them totally from that promise and deliver up the child to a stranger, as was then the constant practice, (?) and as since enjoined by the 29th Canon, which says, 'No parent shall be urged to be present, nor be admitted to answer as godfather for his own child.' (Chap. v.) It never could have been the intention of the Church to set aside the natural rights or duties of parents, and to substitute the offices of strangers instead. The sponsor's office is additional, not substitutinal; designed not to relieve parents of an obvious

obligation, but to aid them in the discharge of it, and if occasion there were, to correct and compensate for defects in parental management."

I. — Page 215.

"I believe therefore and confess one holy only Church, which (as members of Jesus Christ, the only Head thereof) consent in faith, hope, and charity using the gifts of God, whether they be temporal or spiritual, to the profit and furtherance of the same. Which Church is not seen to man's eye, but only known to God, who of the lost sons of Adam hath ordained some as vessels of wrath to damnation; and hath chosen others as vessels of His mercy to be saved: the which also, in due time, He calleth to integrity of life and godly conversation, to make them a glorious Church to himself."— *Confession of Faith used in the English Congregation at Geneva, received and approved by the Church of Scotland.*

"We assuredly believe that by baptism we are engrafted in Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of His justice, whereby our sins are covered and remitted."— *Conf. Art. xxi.*

"All the elect, and they only, are effectually called, although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the word . . . Effectual calling is the word of God's almighty power and grace,

whereby, out of His free and especial love to His elect, and from nothing in them moving Him thereto, He doth, in His accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ by His word and Spirit," &c.—*Larger Cat.* Qu. 67, 68.

THE END.

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